Tikbalang Publications

First Quarter
1979

The Philippines Comics Review

Is COCHING still relevant?

NIÑO'S ART

TOLENTINO
First Filipino Comicbook Editor

ALEX TOTH
Opinions

RAVELO
Iconoclast

NESTOR REDONDO '79

SPECIAL REDONDO FOLIO

PREMIERE EDITION

the editor speaks

WE'RE MAKING HISTORY!

The comics has been with us for nearly a century. Ever since Rizal came out with the first "strip" called *"Ang Matsing at ang Pagong"*, people (not necessarily just the comics addict) have been "taking in" stories in the most "painless" manner possible – through the medium of comics.

Comicsreaders number in the millions. This is true even of the Philippines. There is an estimate which we read sometime ago that places the readership of comics around the vicinity of 8 out 12 Filipinos, an estimate which is even greater than the readership of "legitimate" printed publications such as newspapers and magazines.

Clearly such a large readership needs and *deserves* a venue for items which it finds topical. This magazine would provide that venue.

In the pages of the *Philippine Comics Review* you will read *everything* that has anything at all to do with the comics. Have you ever wondered about the influences which helped shape the art of Nestor Malgapo or *Ading Gonzales*? Perhaps you would like to learn how *Nestor Redondo* got a break in the D.C. Publications. Or what *Alfredo Alcala* and *Alex Niño* are doing now.

Maybe comics writing is your thing'. Then you would surely be interested to know the doings of local comicdom's "bionic writer" (he has 34 novels being serialized simultaneously), or what new stories *Mars Ravelo* is cooking up.

Or you may want to know the answer to the question that is being asked of us everytime: *Whatever happened to Francisco V. Coching?*

Coching, creator of *Hagibis, El Indio,* and other comics characters dropped out of sight sometime ago. When? Why? Is he planning a comeback? You will learn the answer to these and other questions, in these pages.

Comic doings abroad will also be featured here. Both artists and writers and their opuses will be analyzed, studied, commented on and perhaps criticized at length. Are we starting to whet your appetite? Are these topics interesting? We think they are. And there will be more. Much more. A single glance at the table of contents of this issue will confirm this.

But we also think that the *Philippine Comics Review* will serve a positive function in the trade itself: the artists and writers will know how they sit with their appreciators, for we intend to make periodic surveys regarding stories and illustrations, in addition to printing the thoughts of the readers in *'The Forum'*,* which is a permanent feature of this mag. By so doing we hope to contribute to the improvement of Philippine comics.

This magazine is the first of its kind in the country. There has never been quite anything like it before. This magazine is a historical *first* in the local comics scene.

We may sound immodest, or crass or downright boastful, but can you blame us if we crow a little? Because we are certain that when the history of Philippine comics in the 70's is written down, this magazine will be in it, even if only as a footnote.

RHM

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* *Starting Next Issue*

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The Philippine Comics Review

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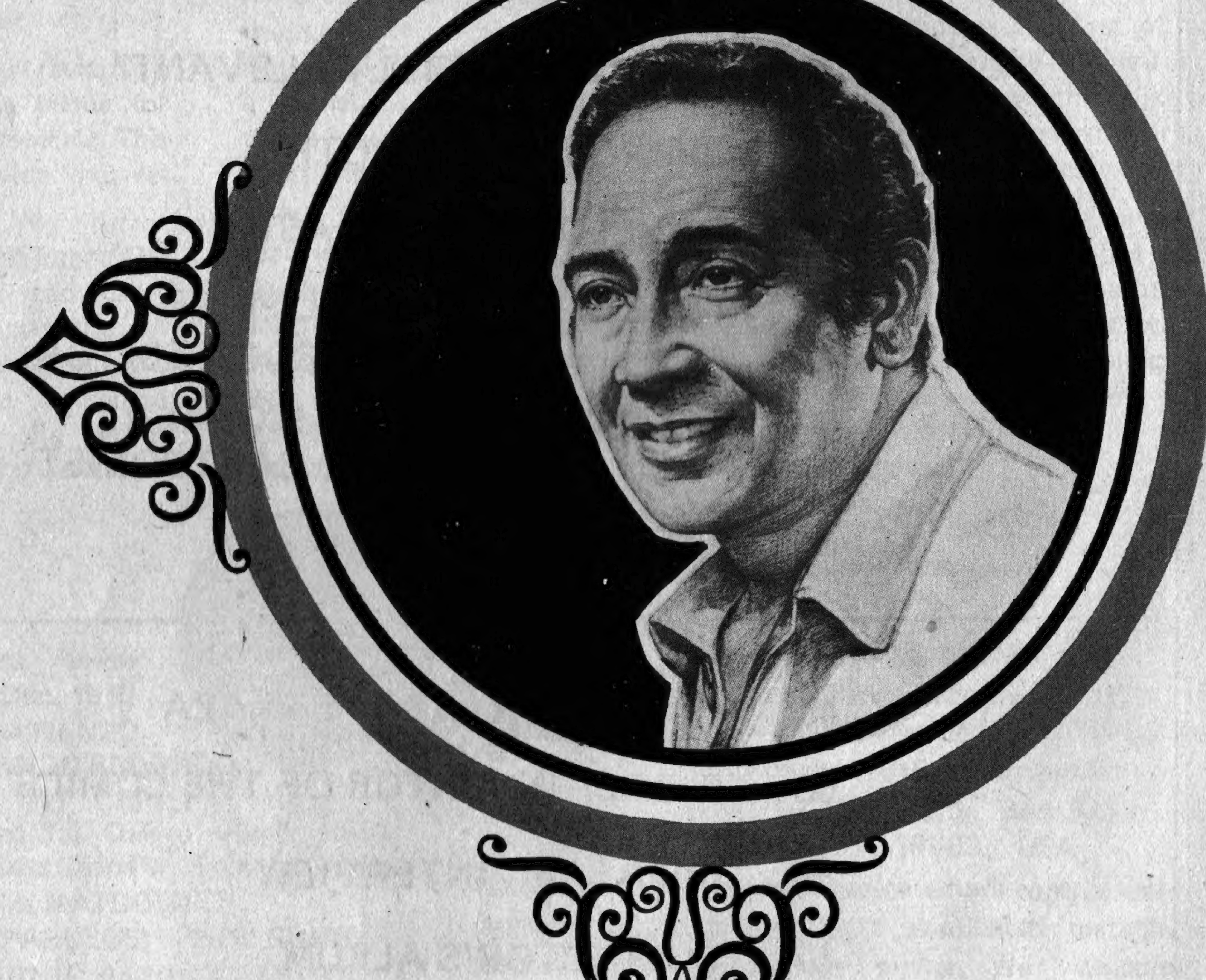


ING

STILL RELEVANT?

by: ROS H. MATIENZO

1. COCHING DISAPPEARS

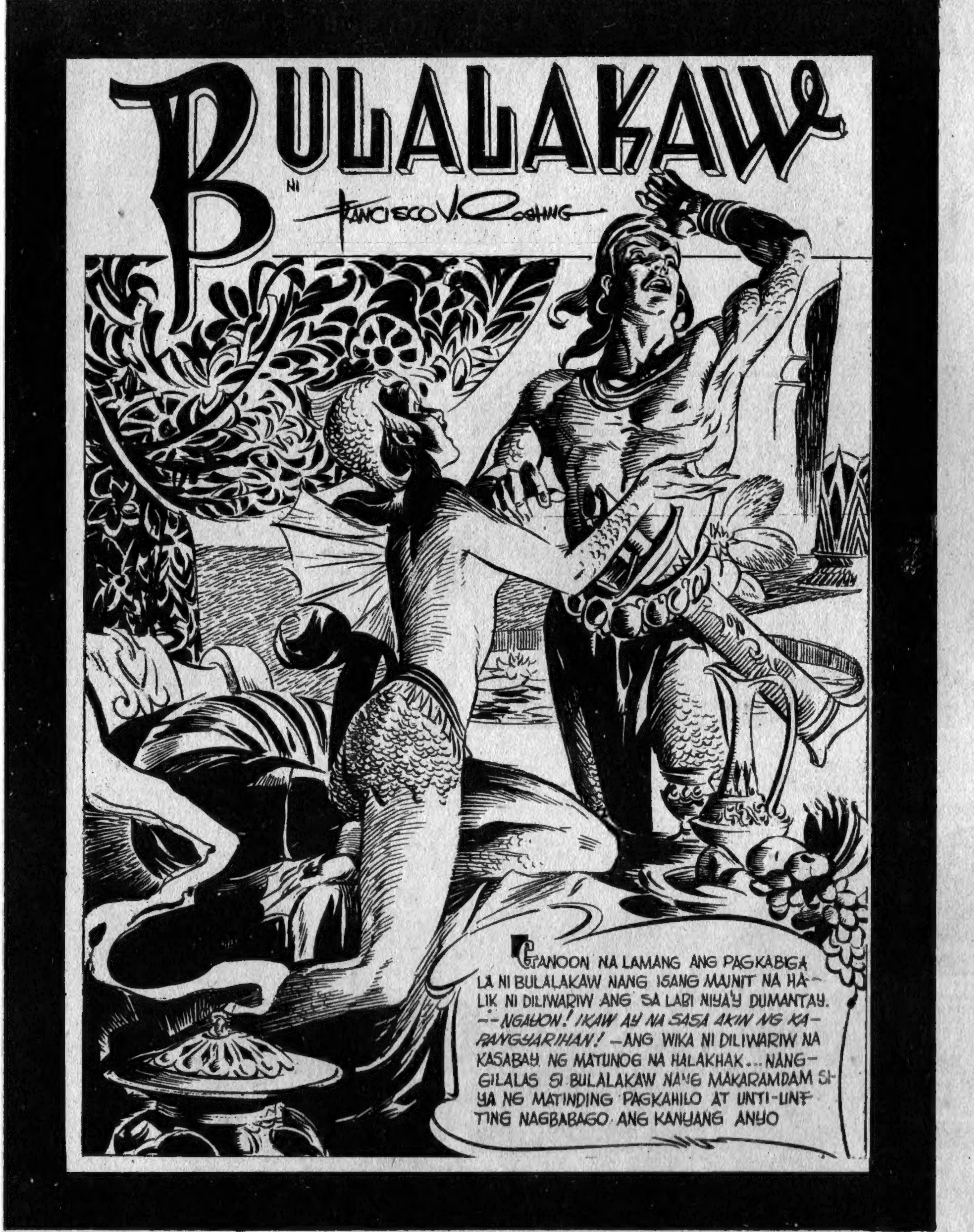
Francisco V. Coching has always loomed larger than life in the mind's eye. We've never met Coching until one February Tuesday. And before our meeting we had always imagined him to be imbued with the traits of his comics-hero creations: stalwart, agile, intelligent, handsome, virtuous, in short, all man, and always a winner.

His notable creations such as *Hagibis Barbaro, El Indio Bertong Balutan', Don Cobarde, El Negro* and many others, all had one thing in common: they were heroes in the strict sense of the word, they belonged to the same mold as Beowulf, Sigfried, Galahad, Roland, Theseus, Hercules, Samson. They had another thing in common: They were all heroes with problems, and Coching gave life to these creations long before the "heroes with problems" trend became fashionable abroad, specifically the U.S.

The Coching hero was an underdog, fighting for the justness of his cause and he did so without appearing to take himself too seriously (and thus preventing his becoming a caricature), going through tribulations that would break ordinary men. And in the end he emerged a better man, with integrity intact, his goals accomplished: a kingdom has been saved or a heroine rescued, perhaps a horde of invaders has been repelled or a mistake rectified and the rightful heir to a throne has assumed kingship, or a villain justly hanged, impaled with a spear or encarcerated for life, or perhaps a menace has been reduced to cinders.

The hero would then ride off with the heroine, or perhaps hold hands together and face a better tomorrow, and go off to wherever immortal comic book characters go after the last panel has been drawn and the last balloon had been inked.

Then, Coching, author and artist, suddenly stopped comics work in 1973. After 53 novels (most of


BULALAKAW
NI FRANCISCO V. COCHING
GANOON NA LAMANG ANG PAGKABIGA LA NI BULALAKAW NANG ISANG MAINIT NA HALIK NI DILIWARIW ANG SA LABI NIYA'Y DUMANTAY. --NGAYON! IKAW AY NA SASA AKIN NG KAPANGYARIHAN! —ANG WIKA NI DILIWARIW NA KASABAY NG MATUNOG NA HALAKHAK... NANGGILALAS SI BULALAKAW NANG MAKARAMDAM SIYA NG MATINDING PAGKAHILO AT UNTI-UNTING NAGBABAGO ANG KANYANG ANYO

Bulalakaw (L) an example of the early Coching; *Hagibis* (top R) Coching's most popular creation; the artist (bottom) at work in his den.

which he pencilled, inked and lettered himself, and most of which, incidentally, were successfully adapted to film) the artist-author was suddenly nowhere to be seen. It was as if a fountain of creativity had stopped giving forth its precious liquid, had exhausted itself and gone dry. People, and we mean people from all walks of life asked: "What happened to Coching? "

There were speculations. Was he sick? Is he dead? Save for a handful, nobody knew the answers. Gradually the questions ceased to be asked. Coching was just simply gone, period. Why, no one knew. Where, no one seemed to care anymore.

The artists who had worked in Coching's time also dropped out of the scene at about this period, one by one. It was as if an age had ended, and the precursor to its ending was the disappearance of its very brilliant star in the Philippine comics firmament. Some retired. A few, as in the case of Redondo, Alcala, Niño and de Zuñiga, found greener pastures in the lucrative comics industry abroad and are now devoting their energies to the seemingly insatiable international market that has developed a taste for the Filipino drawing style. This 'exodus' of talent from the local scene resulted in a dearth of quality artists.

Nature abhors a vacuum, as does the comics industry. And the departure of the old guard signalled the advent of younger artists who were waiting in the wings, to take their turn. And take their turn they did, and they proceeded to dominate the comics landscape.

The question about whatever became of Coching, as mentioned, was not being asked anymore. If a question even remotely related to Coching was being asked, it was; "Is Coching still relevant? " Because, having dominated the field, the new generation of artists has also appeared to have successfully convinced the comics fan through the constant exposure of their work to the appreciators, that *their* art is the *'now'* art, and that Coching and his ilk are gone and never will return, thank God. They aver that Coching's drawing style is 'passe.' Too, they would have everyone believe that their style is *the* style of the "present, and perhaps the future as well, a style that is characterized by a lot of penwork and what appears to be an abstract, absent-minded disregard for artistic disciplines such as correct anatomy, realistic perspectives, proportion, composition, and general draughtsmanship, not to mention cleanliness, of the finished strip. The "loose" style, it is called. Coching, many new illustrators say, would be out of step with the times where he to re-appear now. Would he really be? To learn the answer we decided to seek the man out.

2. COCHING FOUND!

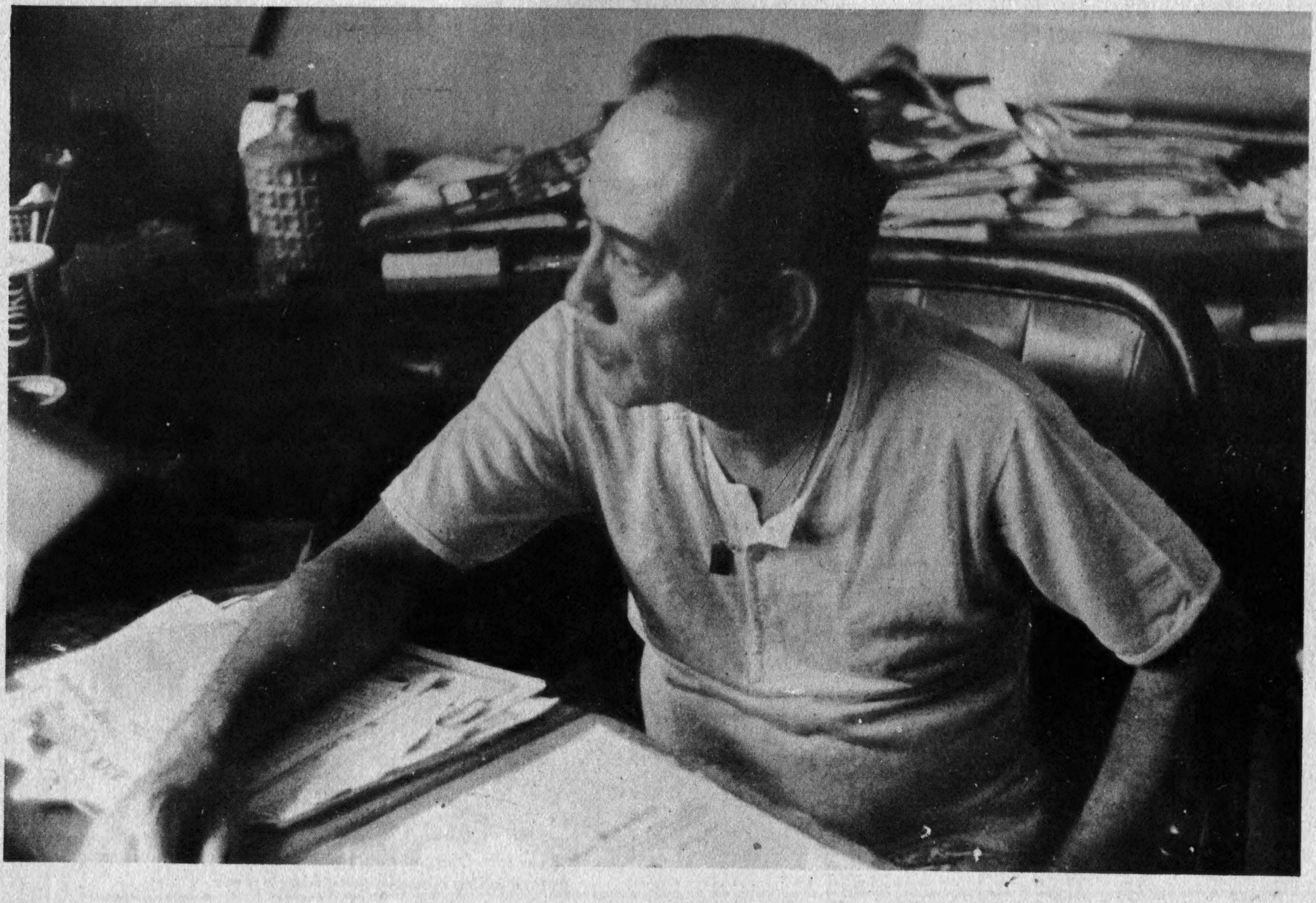
Valhalla was the equivalent of paradise to Nordic warriors. It was a place where the good, and the just go, when they have breathed their last. And it was just fitting and perhaps ironic, that we found Coching in Valhalla.

It was a sweltering Tuesday afternoon, when the Associate Editor and ourself made the journey to Valhalla, a long narrow street near the Pasay City Hall. Earlier, we had been clued-in about where the man lives. Much later we found ourselves in front of two houses with identical numbers.

One of the houses was done in the old 1920's style. The other one was constructed in the modern manner, and somehow had a look that shouted "this is where Coching lives! " There was something very familiar about it. And then suddenly we realized what it was. We had seen the house many times in the strips before. It had been used as backgrounds for stories like *"Playboy"* and " *Gigolo*" and we knew that Coching just has to be living there. We knocked. A dog barked. Then someone opened the door. It was the man himself.

He motioned us to come in. And with the dog still yapping, we entered the living room. We introduced ourselves. There was a brownout when we were there and the house was starting to heat up. So he bade us go into his workroom, where it was cooler.

The room was cluttered with the usual artist's paraphernalia: drawing boards, a pot of brushes and pens, a set of bound comics where all of his opuses had appeared in. On the wall was hanging a black, sequinned, wide-brimmed *sombrero*. "That came from Mexico," said the man. "I brought it home as a souvenir of my visit to that country." We talked of this and that. Then the crucial questions. Why have you stopped comics work? we asked.



"No more", he said. "Everything I have ever aspired for, I already have. I feel fulfilled. It's time for me to take it easy".

Coching's idea of taking it easy is going to the golf course for a few rounds. And dancing. The man just loves to dance. Very recently, he found himself the first prize winner of a dancing contest which was held in the Manila Hotel.

And he goes out of the country every two years. "The only two cities of the world that I haven't gone to are Peking and Moscow," he informed us.

What does he think of the present crop of illustrators and their work? *"Hindi pulido ang kanilang mga trabaho,"* he said.

Where did he get the ideas for his stories? "From real life, mostly, ' he said. Some of the plots of my stories actually happened to me . . you know, almost *everything* has happened to me . . . *Naranasan ko ang maghirap, ang libakin* . . . we lived in a *barung-barong* at first.

"But there's nothing that hard work cannot accomplish. That's how I got out of the *barung-barong*."

Does he have any advise to those who would work in the comics?

"Kailangan nilang pagandahin ang kanilang trabaho. Kailangan nilang magtiyaga, at magka-ambisyon na paunlarin ang kanilang sining, at ang komiks; kailangan din nilang magsikap. Hindi sa lahat ng panahon ay salapi ang dapat isaalang-alang. They appear to look only after them selves, without thought to art, or the readers who patronize the comics."

How does past comic work compare with the present?

"Mas maganda ang gawa noong araw. Ang 'golden age ng komiks ay noong late 50s hanggang 60s. And I am saying that not because I worked during those times. You can see for yourself. Get an old copy of *Pilipino Komiks* and compare it with the best that they have today. There's just no comparison."

Finally we had to go. We had spent the better part of 2 hours in the Coching residence, had eaten a hearty *merienda* there, had even talked to beauteous Maridel, Coching's daughter, a portraitist. And it was time to leave. Does he have any last words?

"Ikinatutuwa ko ang pagkakaparito ninyong dalawa," he said. *"Ang akala ko ay wala nang nakaaalala sa akin."*

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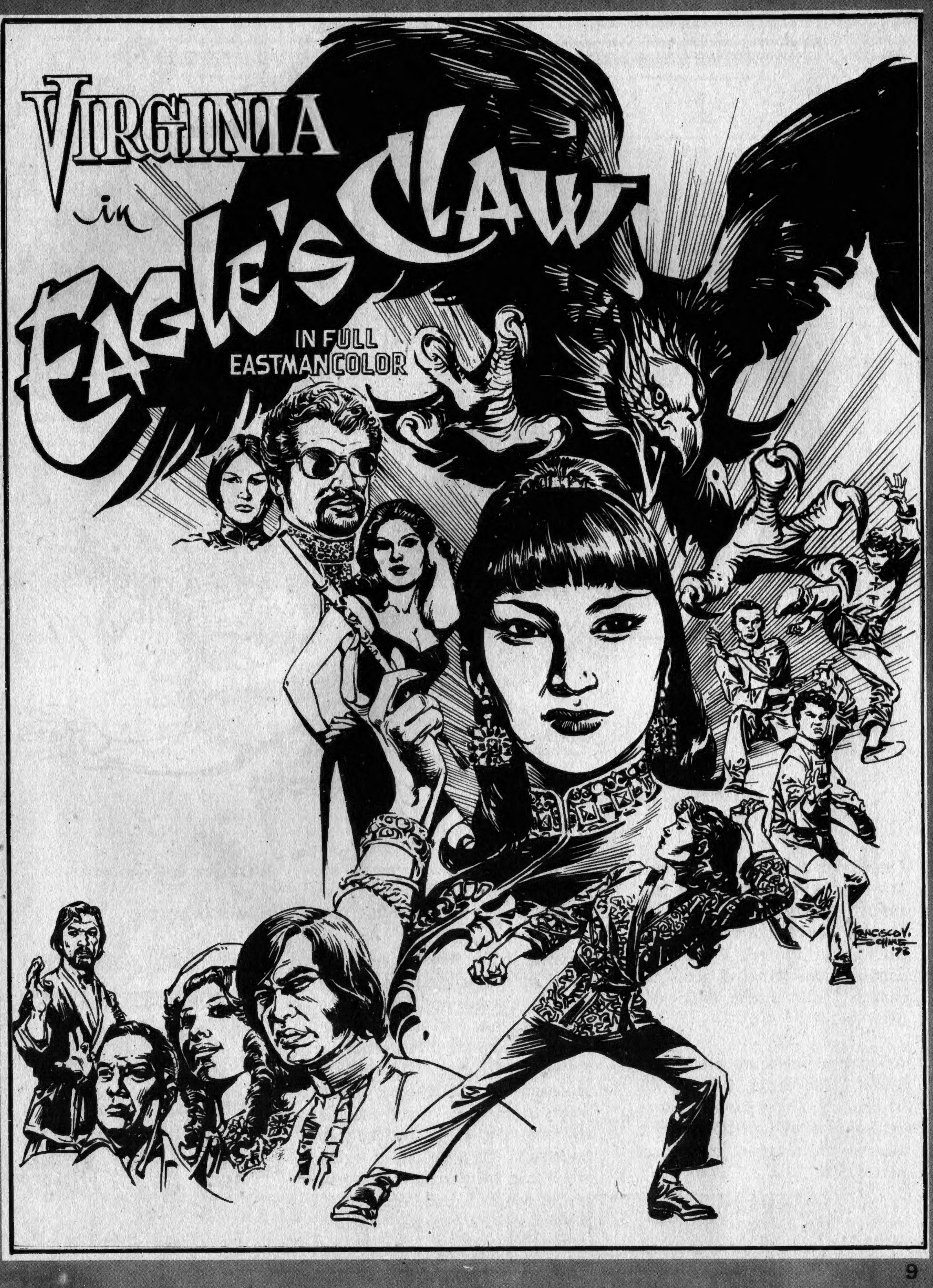
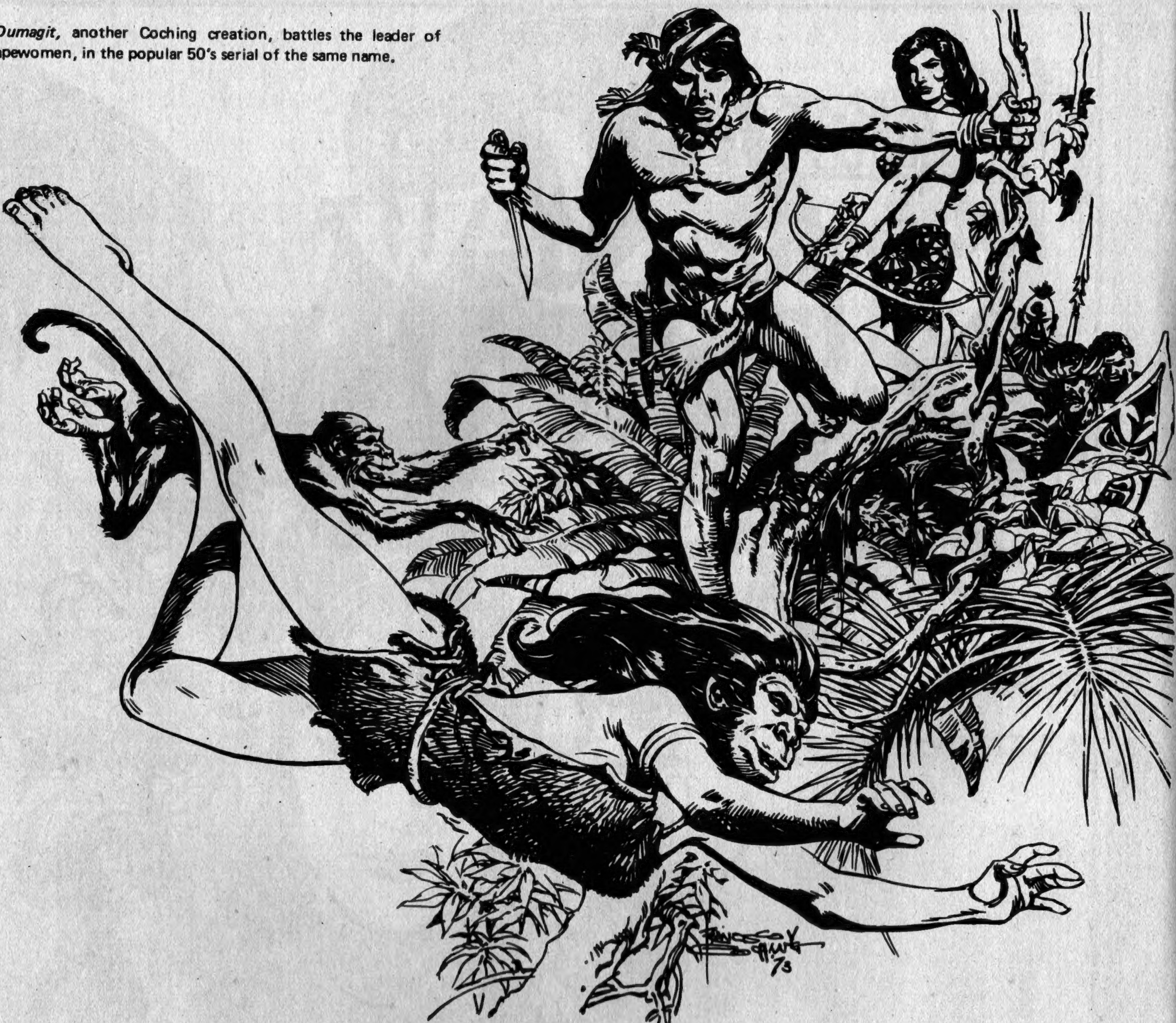
Coching at play: with daughter Maridel and grandson.

Movie ad: Coching's attractive and dynamic layouts are the stuff of which crowd-drawing ads are made.


VIRGINIA
in
EAGLE'S CLAW
IN FULL EASTMANCOLOR
FRANCISCO V. COCHING '73

Dumagit, another Coching creation, battles the leader of apewomen, in the popular 50's serial of the same name.



The comics appreciators, the fans, other artist. as a matter of fact, *almost everybody*, would like to look at good comics art, would like to read well-plotted comics stories. What is 'good' can change. Tastes change. Is Coching passe, then?

As long as there are artists who desire to do better, Coching will be relevant. And we would like to believe that *all* artists have that secret wish, to aspire to produce better work.

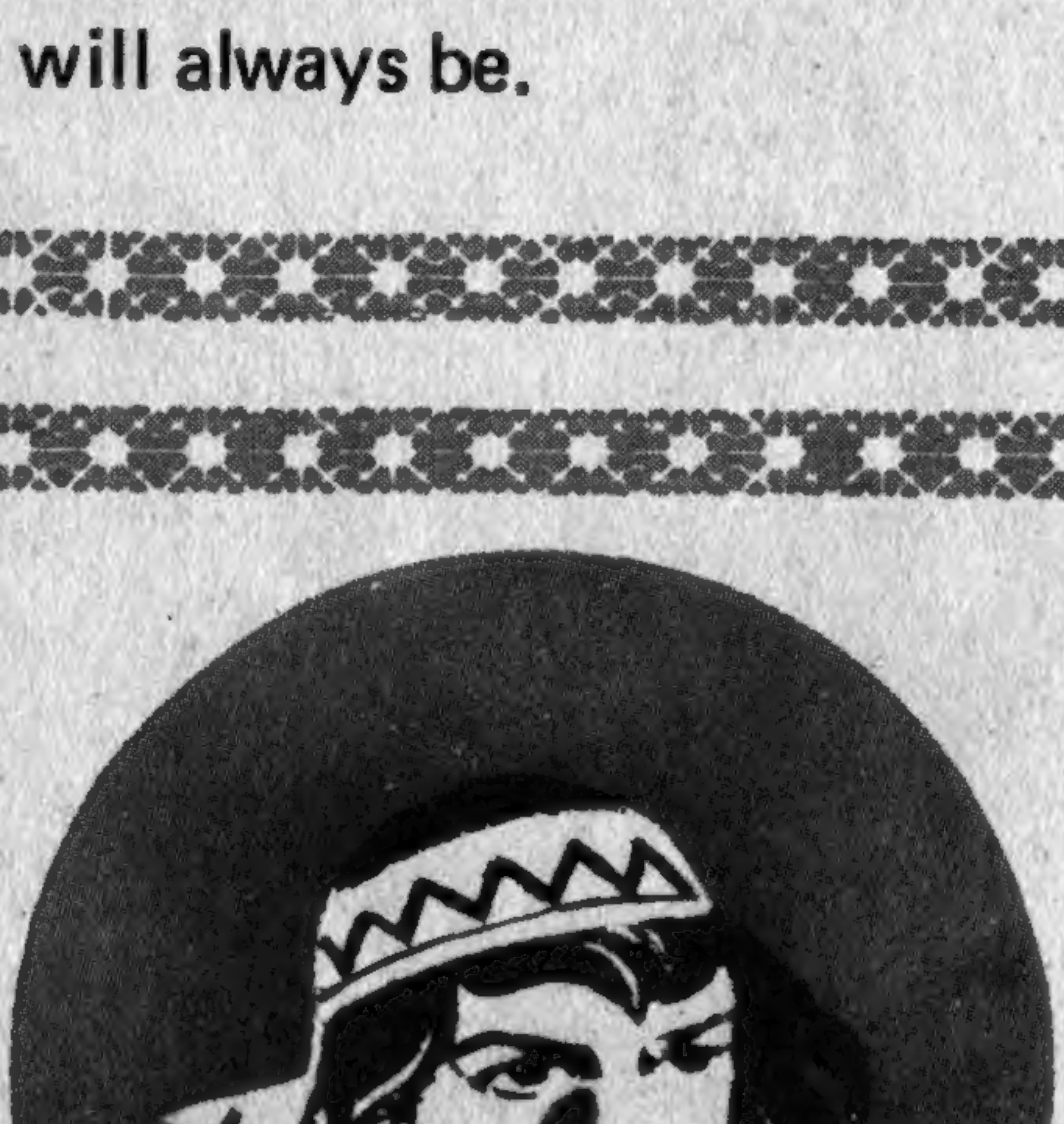
Coching provides a living, breathing example of what great work can accomplish, of what the desire to improve can do. Coching is relevant and he will remain so. And he is relevant *now*, more than at any other time in the past.

Comics artists have a responsibility to themselves and to the fans - to present nothing save the best that they can offer. What many of them are offering now is hardly the best. Coching's achievements should spur these artists to improve. For if there is any one thing which distinguishes Coching's character it is none other than his devotion to work, which can be emulated. *"Kailangang mahalin nila ang kanilang trabaho,"* he said, to improve. As he has.

Is Coching still relevant?

He will always be.

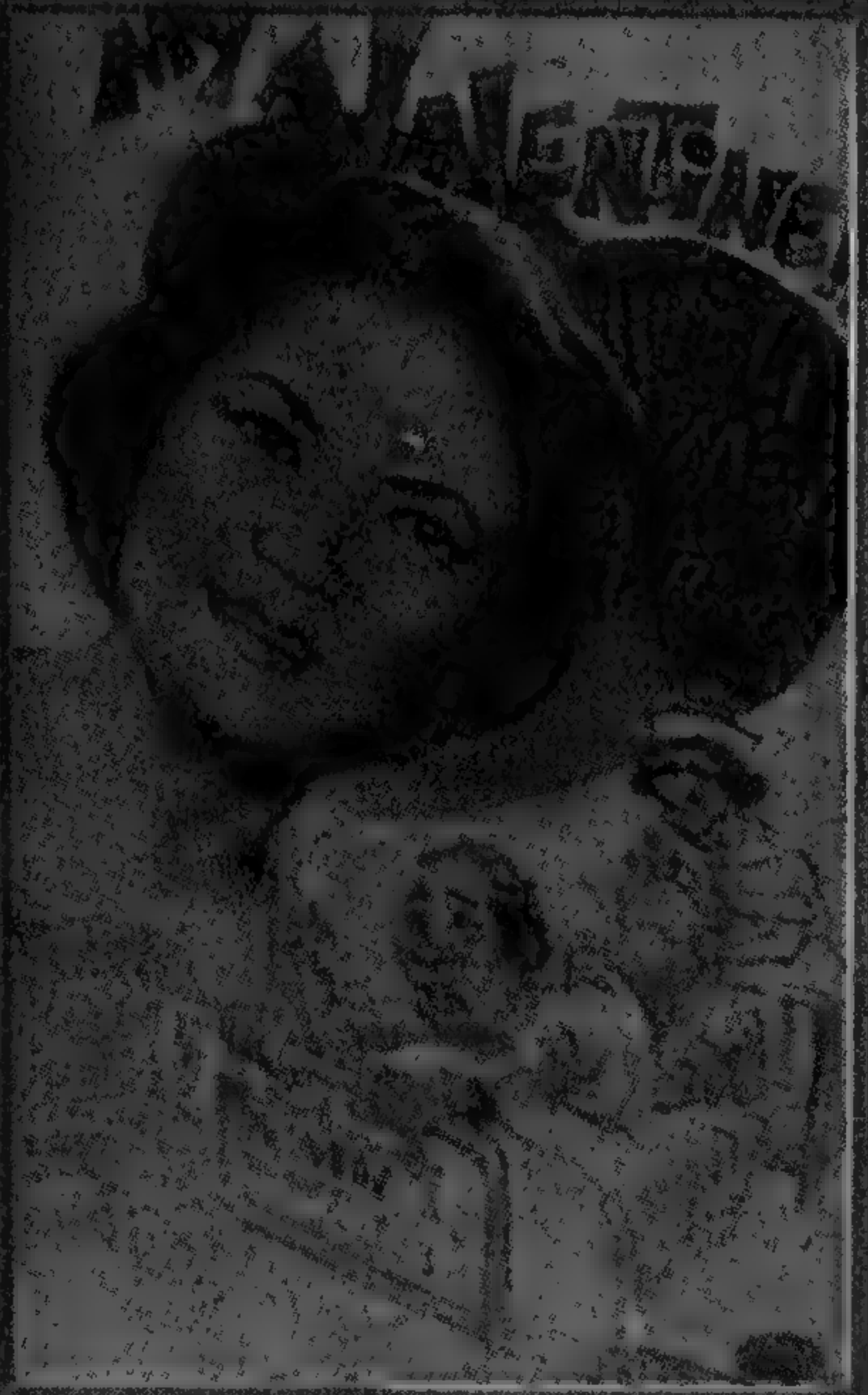
* * *



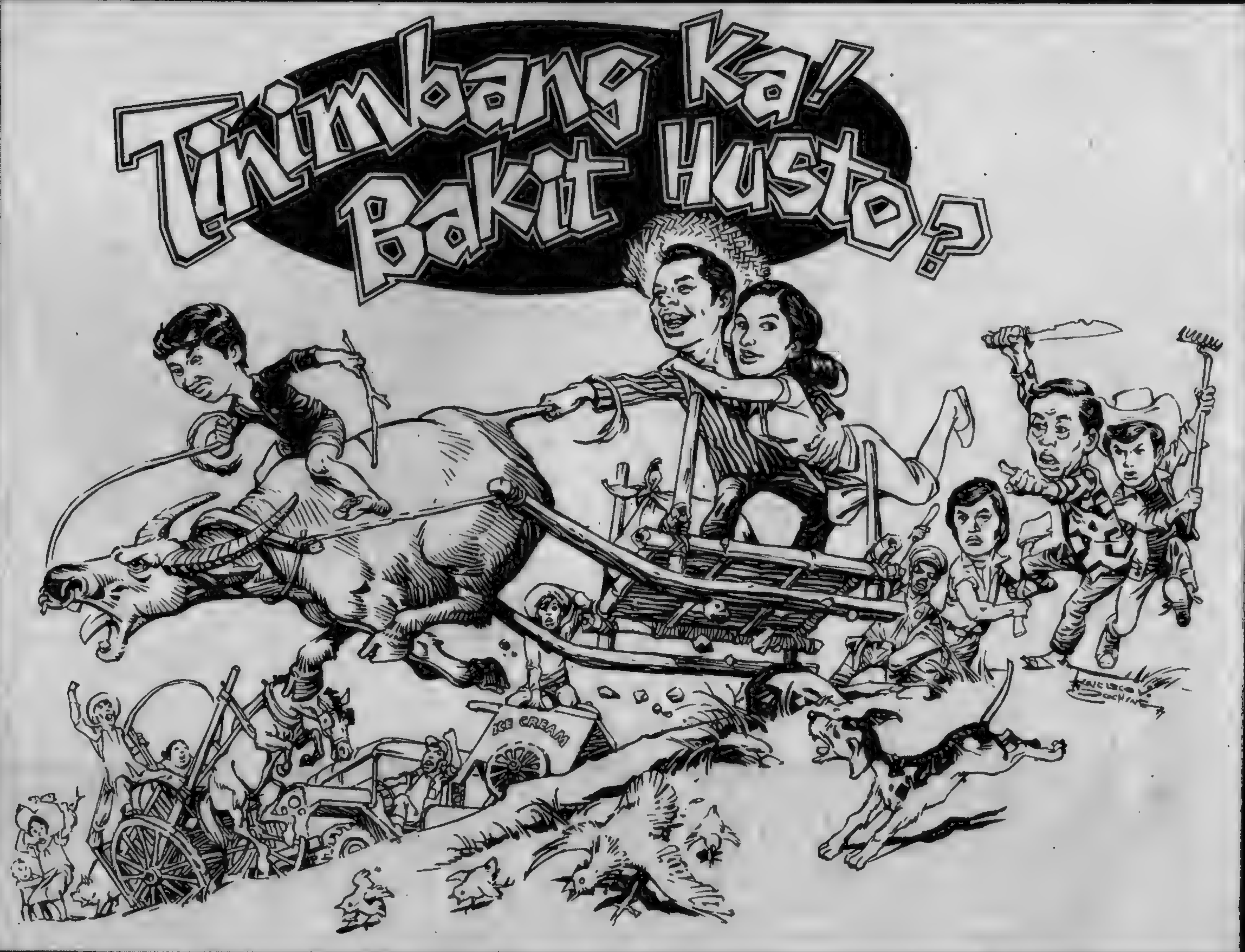
PICTORIAL

Coching's portraitist daughter, the beauteous Mandel.

The artist in front of portrait of wife, Luming, done by daughter Lulu.

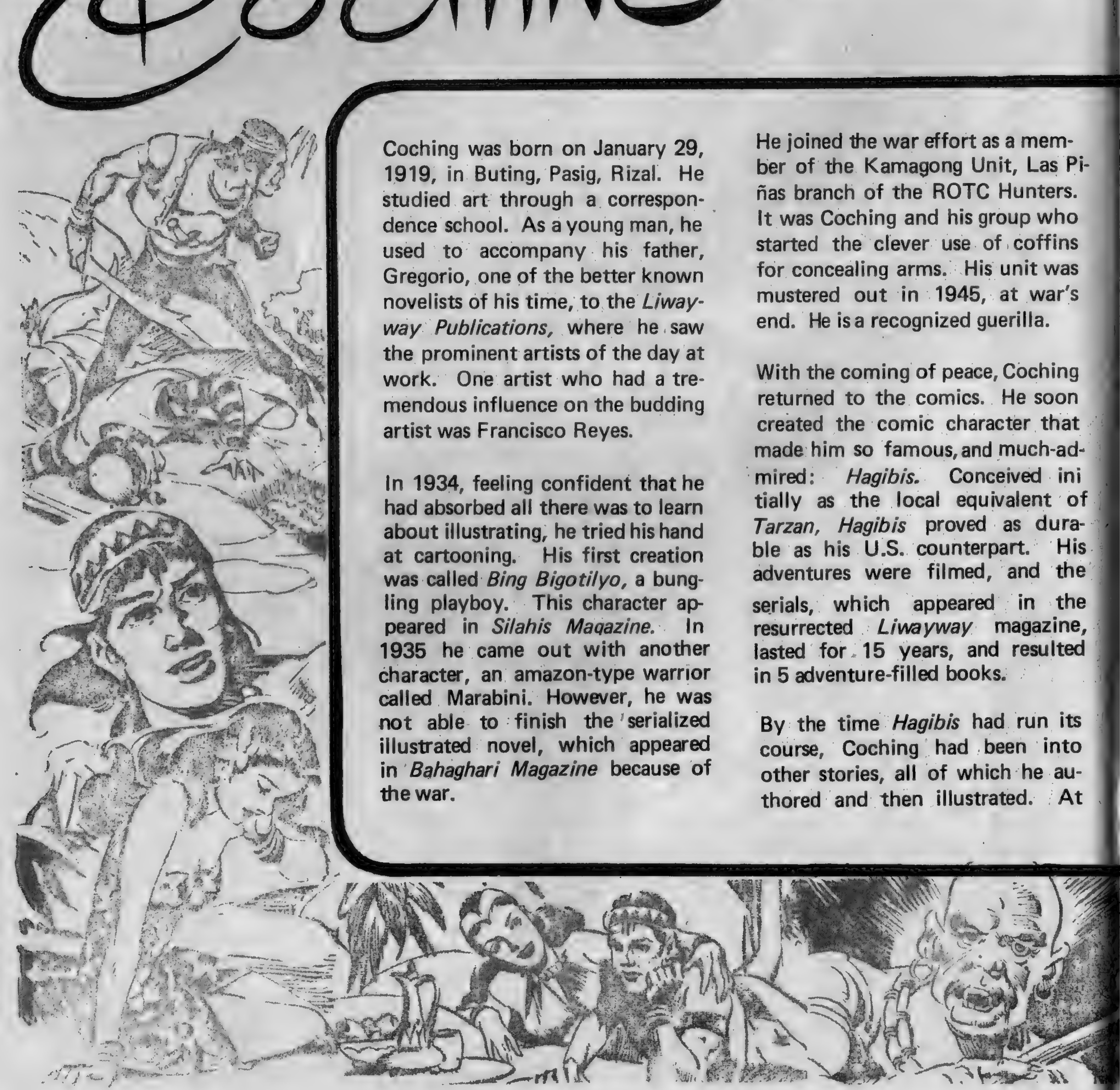

MY VALENTINE

Coching's annual tribute to wife Luming — hand-made Valentine cards.


Tinimbang Ka! Bakit Husto?
ICE CREAM
Francisco V. Coching

Humorous Coching ad: the theme is funny but the distinctive touch prevails.

A CAPSULE BIOGRAPHY OF
Francisco V. Coching



Coching was born on January 29, 1919, in Buting, Pasig, Rizal. He studied art through a correspondence school. As a young man, he used to accompany his father, Gregorio, one of the better known novelists of his time, to the *Liwayway Publications,* where he saw the prominent artists of the day at work. One artist who had a tremendous influence on the budding artist was Francisco Reyes.

In 1934, feeling confident that he had absorbed all there was to learn about illustrating, he tried his hand at cartooning. His first creation was called *Bing Bigotilyo,* a bungling playboy. This character appeared in *Silahis Magazine.* In 1935 he came out with another character, an amazon-type warrior called Marabini. However, he was not able to finish the serialized illustrated novel, which appeared in *Bahaghari Magazine* because of the war.

He joined the war effort as a member of the Kamagong Unit, Las Piñas branch of the ROTC Hunters. It was Coching and his group who started the clever use of coffins for concealing arms. His unit was mustered out in 1945, at war's end. He is a recognized guerilla.

With the coming of peace, Coching returned to the comics. He soon created the comic character that made him so famous, and much-admired: *Hagibis.* Conceived initially as the local equivalent of *Tarzan, Hagibis* proved as durable as his U.S. counterpart. His adventures were filmed, and the serials, which appeared in the resurrected *Liwayway* magazine, lasted for 15 years, and resulted in 5 adventure-filled books.

By the time *Hagibis* had run its course, Coching had been into other stories, all of which he authored and then illustrated. At

his peak he was doing 3 novels simultaneously, which he not only wrote, but pencilled, inked, and lettered as well. All but 3 of his 53 novels were filmed and were commercial successes also. The 3 novels were *Pagano, Kaluluwa ni Dante* and *Haring Ulupong*. The failure of the 3 novels to make the transition into films was due to the technical deficiencies of the Filipino movies at the time.

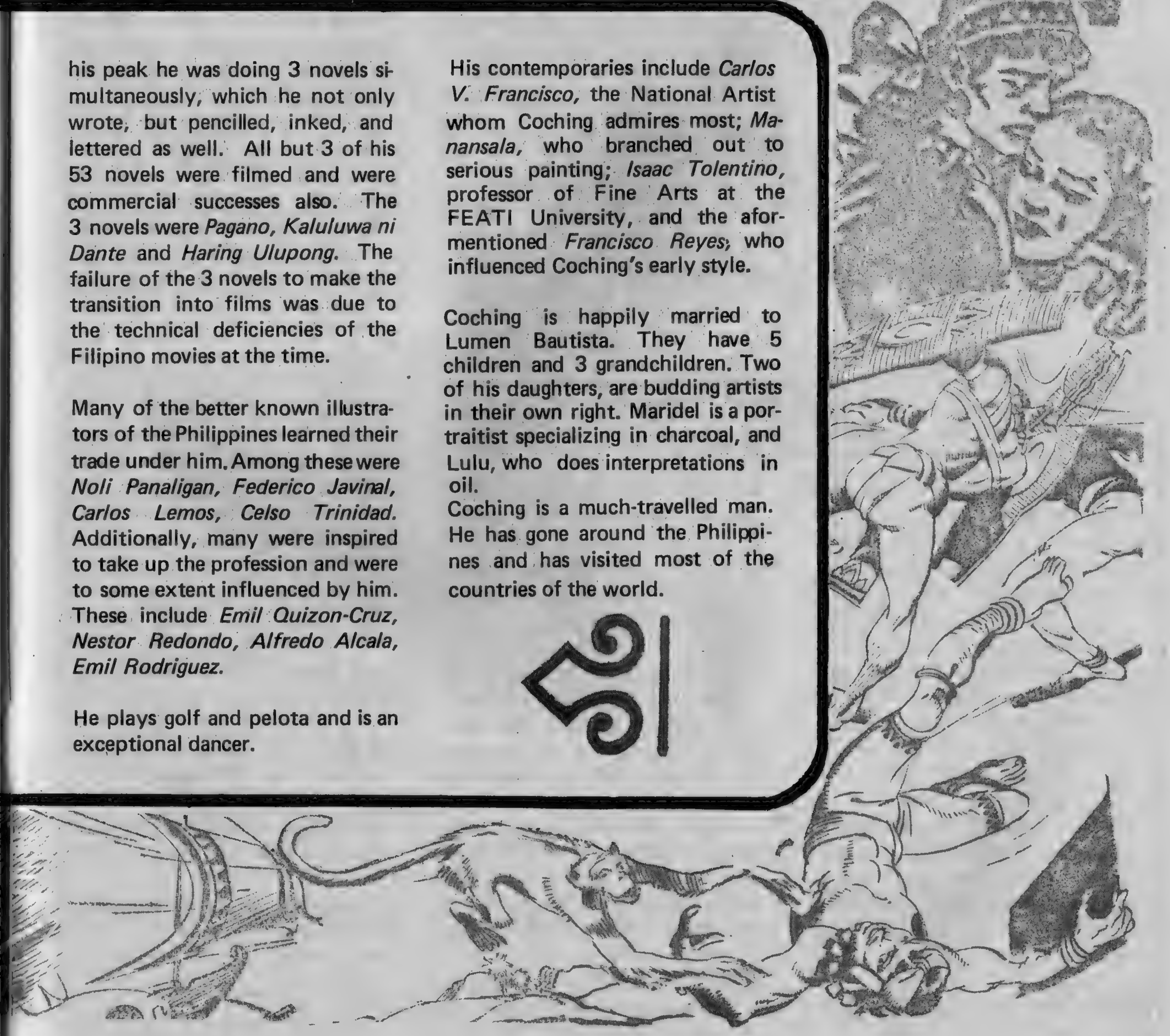
Many of the better known illustrators of the Philippines learned their trade under him. Among these were *Noli Panaligan, Federico Javinal, Carlos Lemos, Celso Trinidad.* Additionally, many were inspired to take up the profession and were to some extent influenced by him. These include *Emil Quizon-Cruz, Nestor Redondo, Alfredo Alcala, Emil Rodriguez.*

He plays golf and pelota and is an exceptional dancer.

His contemporaries include *Carlos V. Francisco,* the National Artist whom Coching admires most; *Manansala,* who branched out to serious painting; *Isaac Tolentino,* professor of Fine Arts at the FEATI University, and the aformentioned *Francisco Reyes,* who influenced Coching's early style.

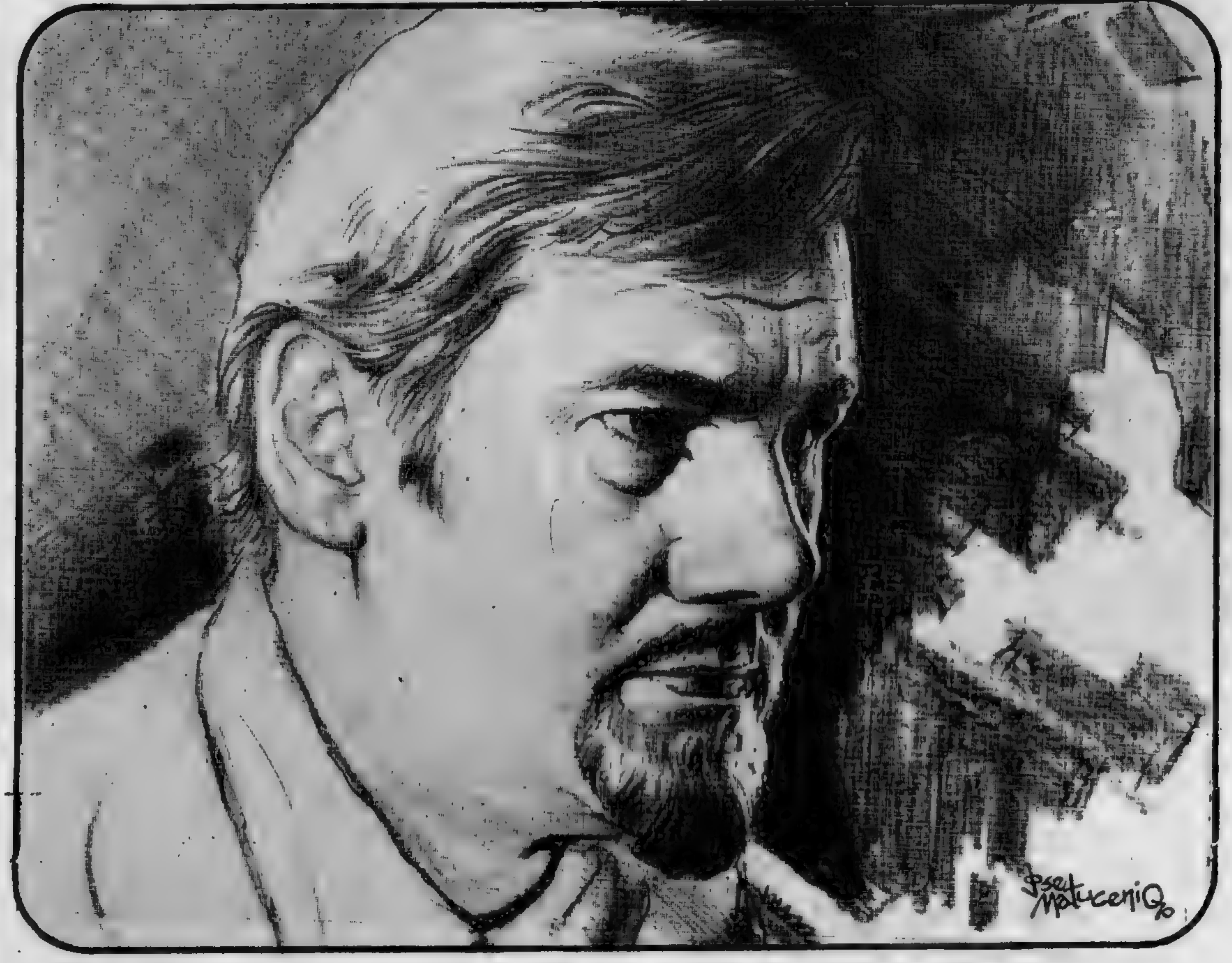
Coching is happily married to Lumen Bautista. They have 5 children and 3 grandchildren. Two of his daughters, are budding artists in their own right. Maridel is a portraitist specializing in charcoal, and Lulu, who does interpretations in oil.

Coching is a much-travelled man. He has gone around the Philippines and has visited most of the countries of the world.



OPINIONS

by Alex Toth



Manuel Auad, friend and confidante, has asked that I expose my current views of the state of the art of U.S. comics (books and strips) — so I will!

They're not popular views — here — nor, perhaps will they be in the Philippine community — but, nevertheless, the truth will out — eventually! So, why not now? *My* truth, anyhow!

Aside from certain curious experimentations with the format of the continuity strip and comic book being conducted today, I find that adventure/action/hero strips have never been worse.

What's been lost: is clear, well-constructed stories of worth, and any semblance of similarly credible storytelling on the part of the artists extant today — thus, we have non-stories being "illustrated" (but *not told!*) by non-storyteller/artists!

The lessons of the past have been forgotten, or discarded! I'm bored with senseless violence labeled as "action", and with the ugliness: of viewpoint, concept, depiction, motive and delineation, currently in vogue. And with lunatic characters of normal and/or gigantic proportions, fighting on either side of the asinine issues created by writers today — in comic books.

There is no beauty — no restraint, or subtlety, no affection, warmth, humanity, logic reason, comradeship, respect or dignity, shown by writers or artists, that in anyway reflect the human condition — it's all just one neverending ritual of "bang, crash, boom! " We have enough of this horror in the real world of TV news/newspapers and newsmagazines, or just outside our front doors, thank you very much, so I for one, as I'm sure others will agree, don't want anymore!

There *is* after all, *more* than just *that* sort of story to tell!

The stuff of life has an endless variety of experiences, of interest to us all, in one form or another, and thus, I cannot comprehend the reason for every comic book writer in the city of New York to keep hitting the same two keys on the keyboard of their common piano, all the while ignoring the other 86, upon which all the greatest symphonies, concerti, tone poems and etudes could, if so desired, be played rather than just the inane and banal repetitious plinkings and boomings of those self-limiting two keys, ad nauseum, ad infinitum!

As for the art — like the writing — it's one dismal "daisychain" of uninspired, dull, destructive and negative copycat/me-too-ism — playing the same two keys! "Boom, boom . . . "

There simply is no relief from the meaningless unreality and talentless overarticulated garbage produced today!

It all *reads* the same — *looks* the same — *is* the same!

No literary or visual *surprises* in a warehousefull!

No charm, wit, or warmth! Or originality, uniqueness . . . Just the heavy, ponderous "Boom, boom" . . .

I can point to American TV programming, and movies, and books and magazines and make the same point – with, thankfully, a few exceptions! This overpowering emphasis on all *negative* aspects in all our media, which will eventually collapse under its own weight, but may bring *us* all down *with* it – unless those creative forces for the "*good*" of life's views, thoughts, aims and desires, will regain *their* place in the sun!

Their presence will create a balance! We need that balance!

Their light will dispel the shadows of negativism/ugliness! Truth will out! Truth is beauty-- clarity-- simplicity and economy!-- it can stand naked! It needs no embellishment!

30 or 40 years ago -- we saw and read evidence of all this in comicbooks and strips- works ofuplifting qualitative effort,stories of all types,and hundreds of characters of interest and personality – positive heroes conquering adversity and failure and danger, simply-constructed and told stories, with art to match! It is with good reason! The best is, indeed, behind us!

Most comicbooks offered within their covers, a variety of stories, heroes, subjects, literary and art styles, approaches and viewpoints that is unknown today!

We relished the many surprises offered by that variety,then available to us, from story to story, within one magazine!

It was delightful to the eye! Genuine fun!

The child in me, as well as the man of 50, loves them, still!

At that time (prewar/postwar years) syndicated adventure strips also took many forms and reflected infinite variety of talents who gave us that which we now call the "Golden Age" of comics ---

Today, however, adventure strips are a bore! Sad, really! Literarily, and artistically -- they are artrocious! With very few exceptions!

Thus, I, like millions of other readers, ignore them in favor of the funny, witty, charming and warm "gag" strips! Which are delightful (and easy) to read -- and enjoy! In today's mad world, they offer us whimsy and a chuckle! It seems all the more noble an effort to create a smile than a frown – thus, gag strips are rising in popularity while adventure/continuity strips are losing ground. (And needed space)

As for the "new and curious" comicbook formats presently at work -- (*Heavy Metal*, for one) -- while I applaud their colorful experimentations, I'm aware of their style over substance, character -- and thus, have reservations as to their genuine merit, for storytelling is still in short supply on those pages. Splashy, impressive art, styling, layout -- yes! But, solid stories, with true continuity art -- no!

There, too – talent, without disciplined knowledge, is at work – lots of unrelated pictures jammed together or strung out, in novel layouts, do not make for genuine continuity storytelling! Stories are vague, so is the art!
But, at least, a beginning's been made to break new ground -- the form itself is under fire, evolving anew!

Yet -- I am old enough to remember "what was" -- and weigh that with "what is" -- and realize that I respect the old, basic form of the strip and the page, with its traditional panel to panel "flow", dialogue balloons and caption panels or blocks, and the beauty, power and simple efficiencies of that form, which made sense, and *still does,* to the creator and his readership.

Logical story/art progression, and I'd like to see it adhered to by experimentalists today,whose tricky designs and strange copy area placements distract and confuse readers, and destroy panel to panel continuity patterns and plot progression of story and art just to be "different"! I applaud the desire and filling the *need* -- but I seriously question the validity of the *result!*

Our job is *communication!* To tell a story!

Any "transmitting" device or applied technical method, which gets in the way of the "transmission/message/story, etc, is a *negative* element, *garbling* that which *ought* to be *clear* and instantly *understood,* and *ought* to be *simply-stated* with *economy!*

Hopefully, present diffused/confused patterns of writing and art, will give way to finding new ways to return to the sound basics of both crafts, through simplicity and clarity! In them lies beauty and true art!

I've said my piece -- one man's opinion -- as requested . . .

Now let's hear *yours!*

Alex Toth

RAVELO

ICONOCLAST

by Ros H. Matienzo

Mars Ravelo is a man very hard to ignore. Especially when discussing comics. He is a man you either like or hate fervently. It is difficult to be indifferent about him. Probably because of the impact his ideas has had in the industry; probably because of creative innovations he introduced into it; probably because his ideas had upset so many "sacred" traditions, which, until he came along, had the force of biblical injunctions; probably because of his monumental ego, or the fact that he is not above cursing, when angry, or even when happy. Although relatively a late-comer in the comics, having joined the industry in 1949, Ravelo is considered by many as a pioneering giant in the field. Because his entry produced shock waves which influenced future comics writers and artists not to mention trends in comics stories. His influence is still being felt up to now, inspite of the emergence of other, younger gifted writers and artists.

To understand the impact of Ravelo in comics, it is necessary to understand the conditions prevalent in the field in its infancy, or to be more precise, in 1949. At that time the "*tayo-tayo*" system was in full force in all of the major publications. You just didn't make it if you didn't belong to the club. This milieu, understandably, produced mediocre writers, mediocre artists and worse comics. But nobody minded. Everybody was content with the way things were. Everybody, that is, except a perennially unemployed young man – Ravelo. The young Ravelo was a dispirited non-entity in 1949. He had held a variety of low-paying, insignificant jobs, then, realizing he was bound for nowhere fast, took stock of himself. Years later, while reminiscing about the event he would relate: "I asked myself what I, at that time 33 years old, was good at. And I came to the conclusion that I was good at two things – drawing and writing. And it dawned on me that maybe I was fated to excel in only one place: The comics".

His first attempt at comics work nearly ended in disaster. He presented his first strip to the major publications. And got promptly turned down (Remember that he was not a member of the club) Clodualdo del Mundo (then the big man at *Ramon Roces*

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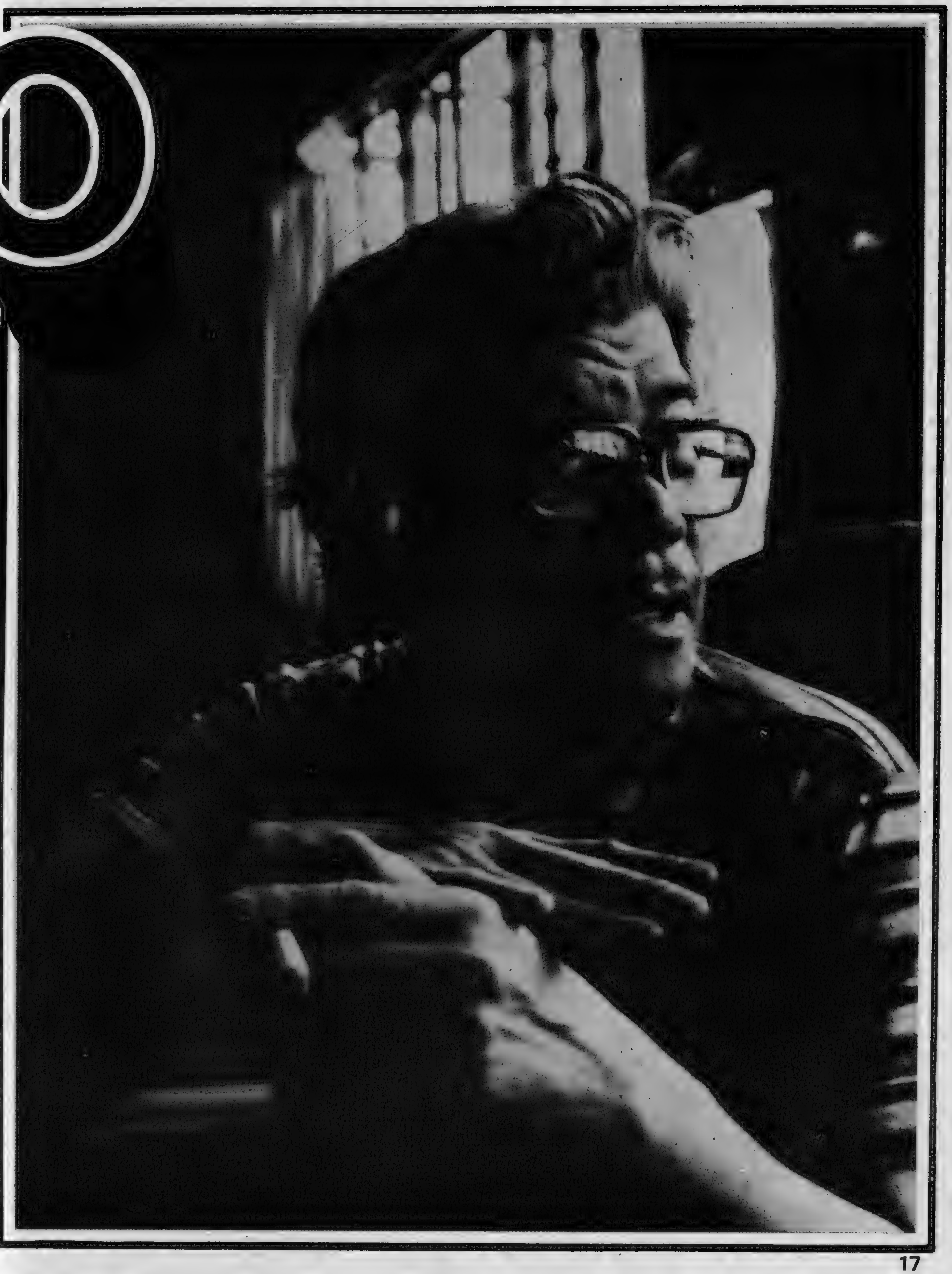


Publications) and company, wouldn't even deign to look at it. The same fate befell the strip at *Bulaklak Publications.*

While being turned down the second time at *Bulakiak.* Ravelo spotted the owner, *Aling Bating* (Beatriz Guballa). That venerable woman was having lice picked from her hair by a minion. Ravelo went to where she was and, voice quivering in sheer desperation, pleaded: "Please take a look at this," while thrusting the strip at the woman.

"I", said the woman imperiously, "have editors to do that. Show it to them."

"I already have," replied the flusttered Ravelo. "But they turned it down."

"Why?" asked the woman, as she crushed a *kuto*.

"I do not know. They have not even read it. Please spare a minute of your time and read it. Please. . ."

Perhaps it was Ravelo's bold approach. Or it could have been his whining plea. But at length the doubting woman reached for the strip.

The rest is history.

After reading a few panels of the strip the woman was by turns giggling, then chortling and later nearly rolling on the floor, choking with laughter. The strip, on command of *Aling Bating* was included in the first issue of *Bulaklak Magazine.*

It was an instant hit.

The strip, " *Rita* ", which told of the antics of a smart-assed brat, struck a familiar chord in the Filipino reader for the situations portrayed in it were typically Filipino, with Filipino actions and reactions. Ravelo's first strip, it was also his first bull's eye against the then prevailing trend in comics writing, a derivative kind of writing that was patterned after American and other alien models.

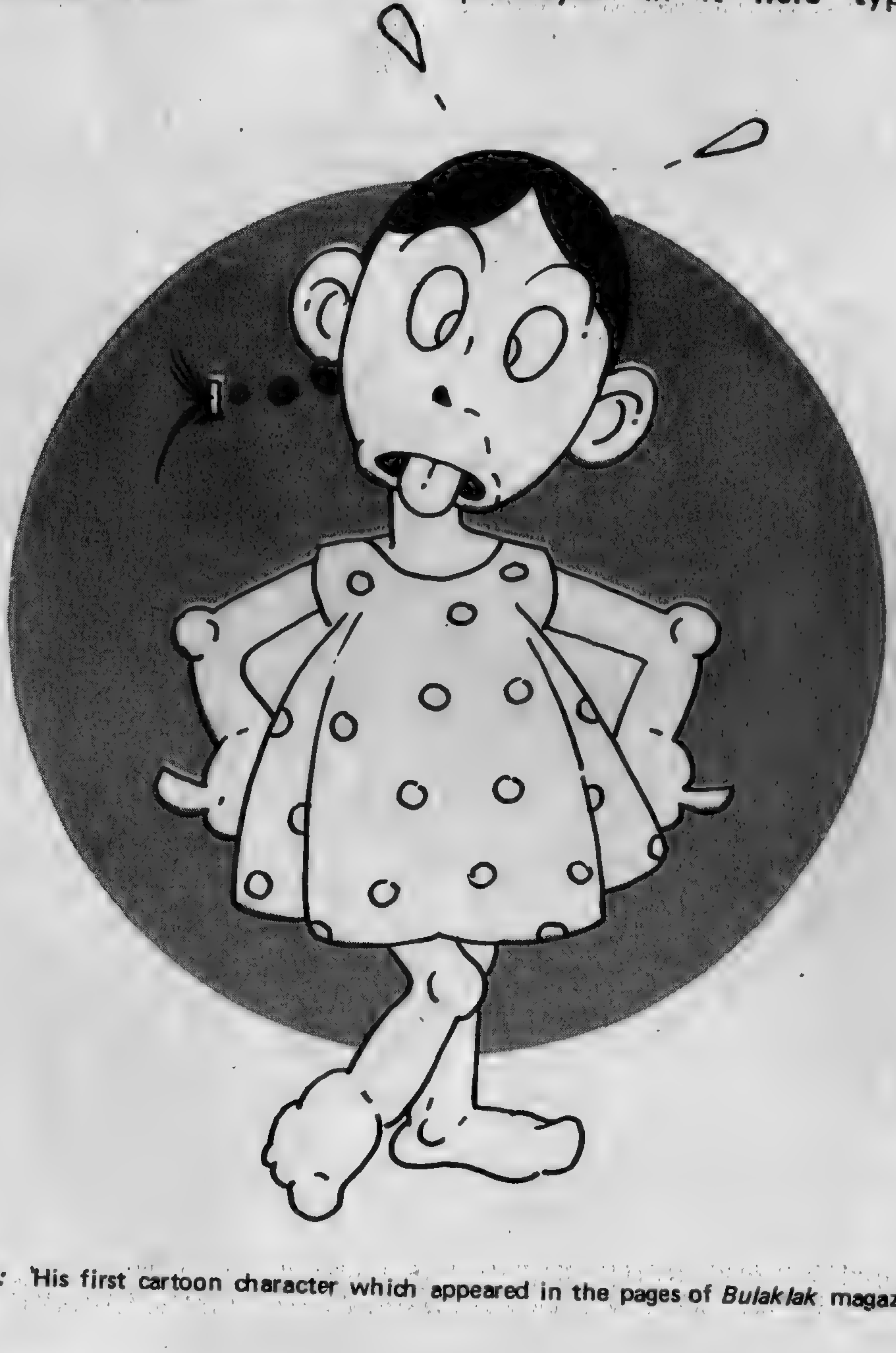
At that time the leading vernacular magazine was *Liwayway.* Pretty soon it wasn't leading anymore either in circulation or popularity. An apprehensive Don Ramon Roces ordered a survey and the awful truth was revealed: The reason for *Bulaklak's* ascendancy, and Liwayway's consequent loss of readership, was Ravelo's " *Rita* ".

Don Ramon, an unwitting victim of the imbroglio, soon learned that the *Roces Publications* was given first chance at Ravelo's runaway strip, but that some numbskull had turned down " *Rita* ". He now wanted to know *which* numbskull had done it. Del Mundo and company understandably kept mum about their part in the brouhaha and professed innocence. Sadly, Don Ramon never did get the satisfaction of getting his hands on the cuprit(s).

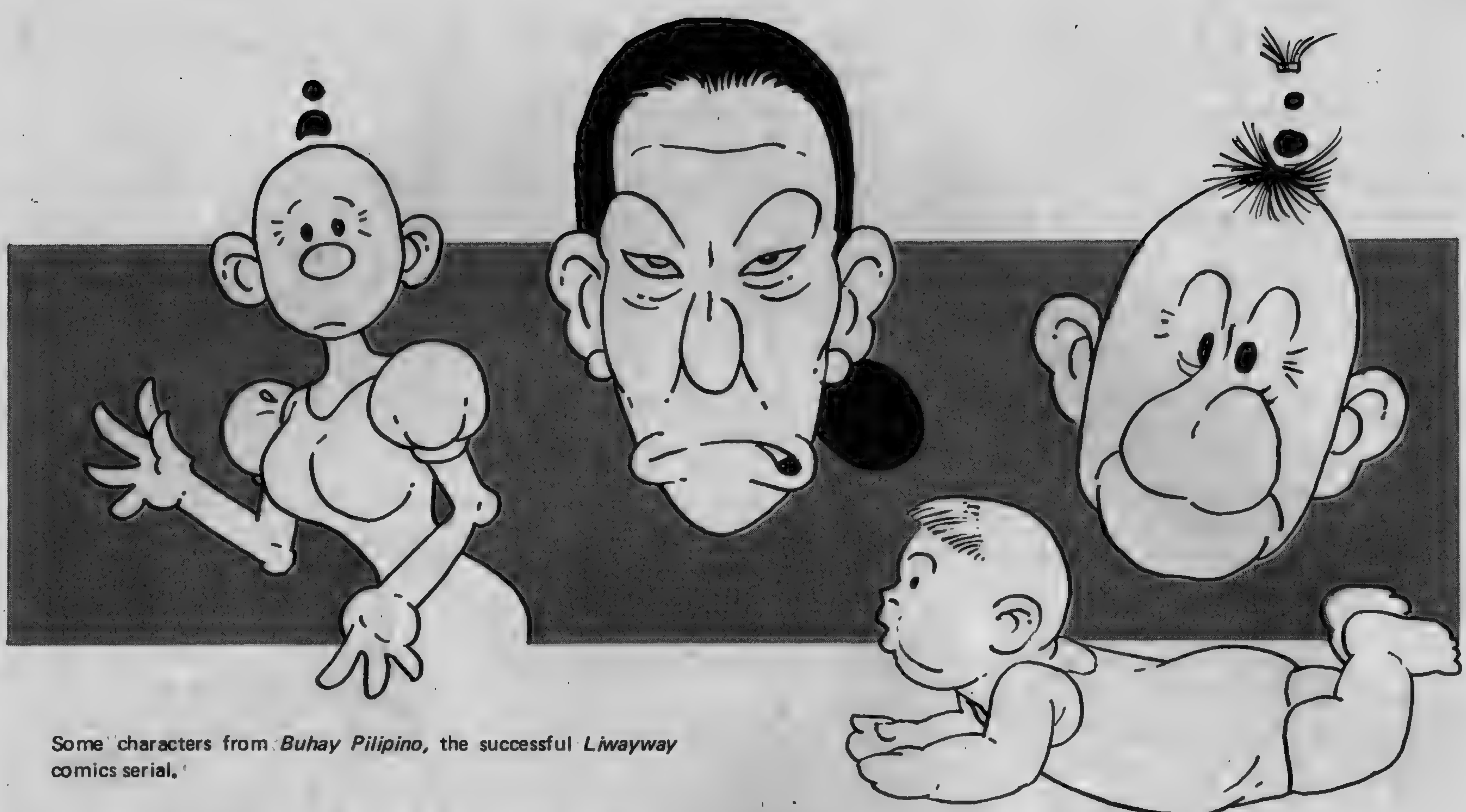
For a while Ravelo waxed fat (and contented) at *Bulaklak* . He continued to script, pencil, letter and ink his strip. Everybody at *Bulaklak* loved him. For wasn't he pulling in the shekels? It was too good to last.

An editor, jealous of Ravelo's popularity, picked a quarrel with him and he left *Bulaklak* in a huff. The chore of continuing the "Rita" strip fell on the shoulders of an untalented hack. And predictably, the magazine's popularity (and circulation) took a nosedive soon after.

Meanwhile, Ravelo was being wooed to join the *Roces Publications* . But the by-this-time-famous author, still remembering yesterday's hurt, did not comment on Don Ramon's overtures. Not at once anyway. But at



Ravelo's *Rita:* His first cartoon character which appeared in the pages of *Bulaklak* magazine.



Some characters from *Buhay Pilipino*, the successful *Liwayway* comics serial.

length the writer relented (for let's face it, he had a family to feed and take care of) and so he decided to join the *Roces* bandwagon

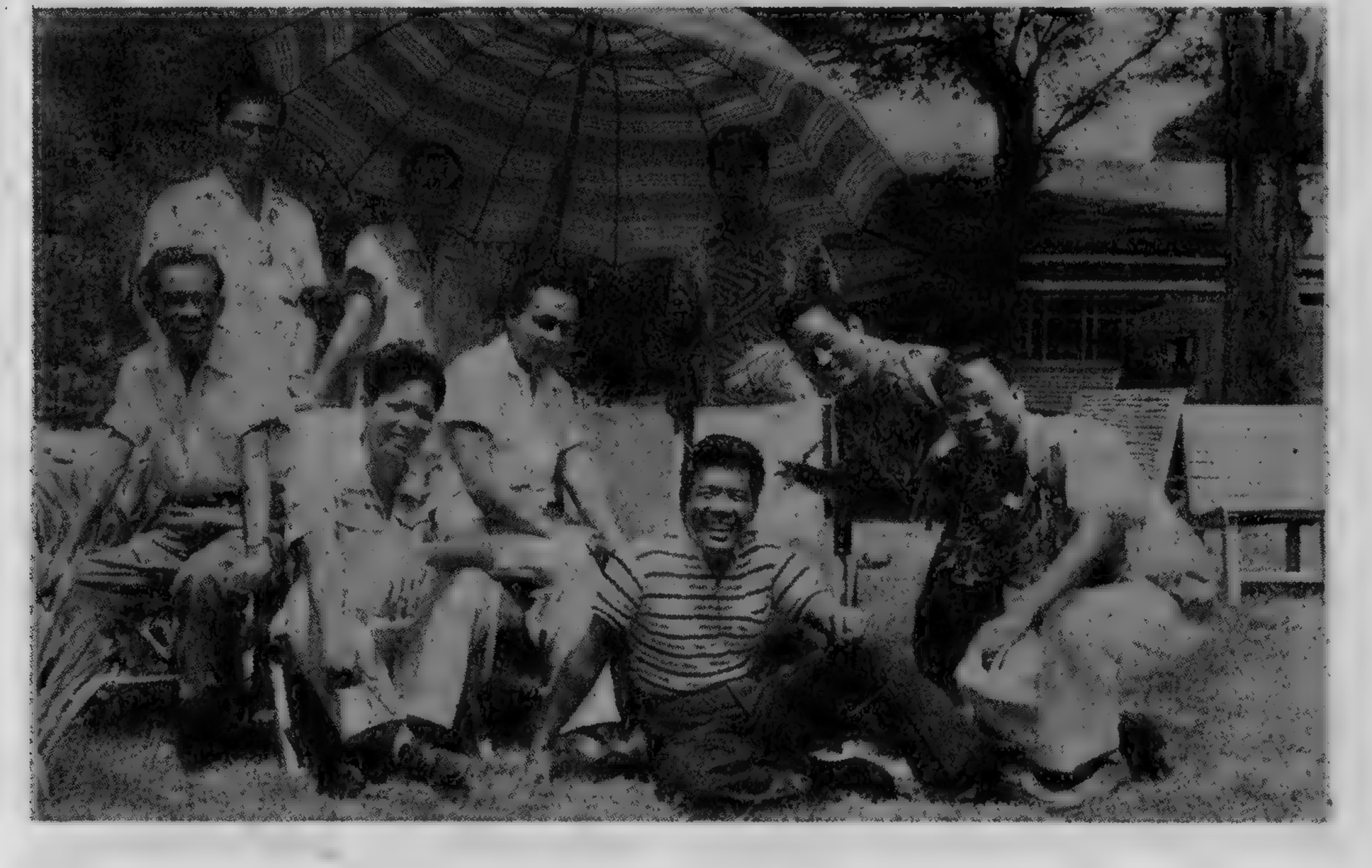
He was to stay with the *Roces Publications* for nearly 2 decades. And it was while there that he did some of his most unforgettable works. But it was not to be at the start.

In the beginning, the powers that be at *Roces* wanted to have a strip similar to the one he had left behind at *Bulaklak.* And some "genius" at *Roces* even suggested to the author that he write about the adventures of teenagers. Ravelo thought it would be such a drag, especially when he was told to pattern it after American teenage characters. So he hibernated for a while as he thought of something that would get off the launch pad, something uniquely Filipino, and at the same time different from his hit character "*Rita*".

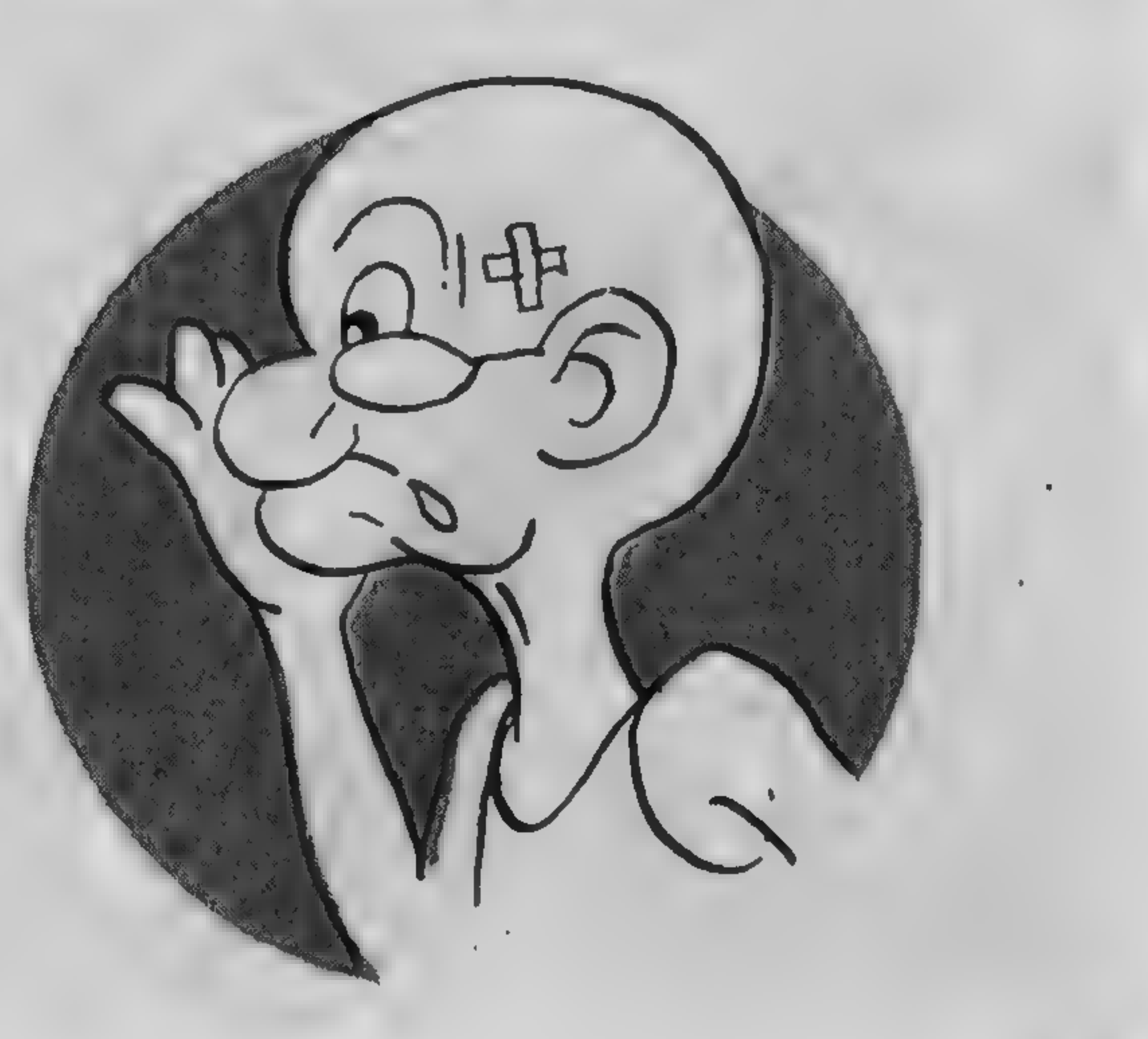
He came up with "*Buhay Pilipino*".

It was Ravelo's 2nd hit. It told of situations that an ordinary Filipino family would encounter. But presented with the Ravelo touch, it was hilarious in the extreme. The strip appeared in *Liwayway* magazine and came to be a circulation booster from the start.

For 10 long years Ravelo worked on the strip. At the beginning, doing it was pure joy. But it soon



A get-together of Ace Publications' stars during its hey-day. From L standing: Nestor Redondo, Rico Javinal, Tony Velasquez, Francisco Coching (leaning). Seated from L: Manuel Carillo, Alfredo Alcala, Jesse Santos, Mars Ravelo, Elpidio Torres (kneeling). Below: *Ipe*, a Ravelo creation for *Pilipino Komiks*.

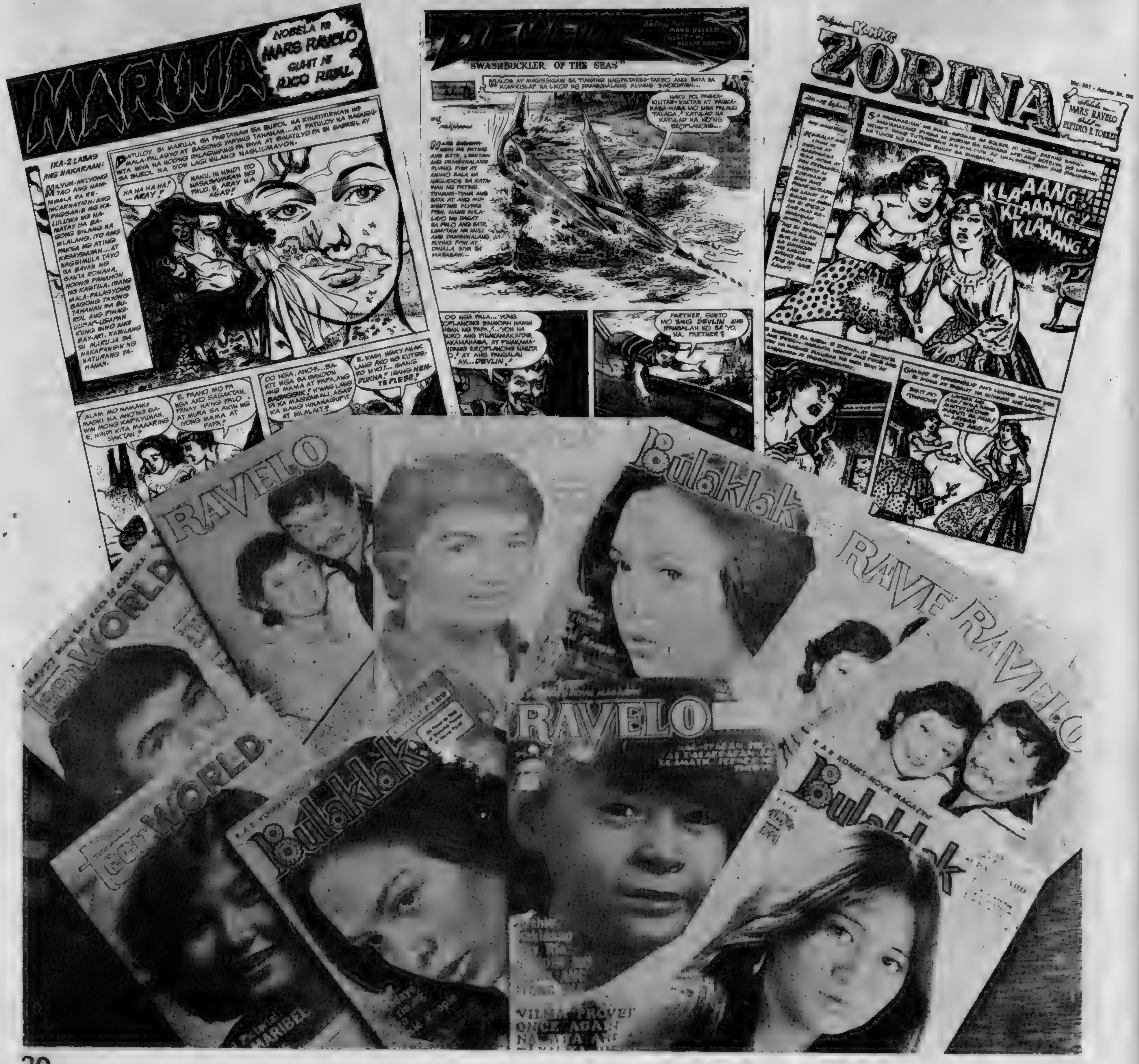


got to be just another chore he had to get over with as fast as he could. For by this time Ravelo was being besieged by personal daemons: he wanted to write novels, among other things.

He submitted the manuscript of a novel to Clodualdo Del Mundo (again), hopeful that the man would at least pass judgment on it. But Del Mundo merely flipped the manuscript into a drawer and forgot all about it. For 6 long months the manuscript gathered dust in Del Mundo's desk. Until, by a fortunate accident it fell on the hands of Don Ramon. And again, history was made.

Ravelo's first novel was *"Roberta"* and it was about the travails of a love-starved, misbegotten child. It was to prove to be the most memorable of all his opuses, and was *Sampaguita Pictures'* "salvation." That movie outfit was all but down and out, its studios having been gutted by a fire. Gambling on Ravelo's first novel, it soon had a hit in its hands, which enabled it to literally emerge phoenix-like from the ashes.

"Roberta" was followed by another hit, *"Darna"*. This character, inspired by *"Superman"*, was to prove the most durable among his creations and also the most financially rewarding. *"Darna"* also had another memorable feature about it: It teamed him up for the first time with a struggling comics artist the soon-to-be-famous Nestor Redondo. (By this time, Ravelo had ceased drawing his stories and


MARUJA
NOBELA NI MARS RAVELO
GUHIT NI RICO RIVAL
IKA-2 LABAS
ANG NAKARAAN:
HA HA HA HA! ...ARAY!
"SWASHBUCKLER OF THE SEAS"
DEVLIN
PARTNER, GUSTO MO BANG DEVLIN ANG ITANGALAN KO SA IYO, HA, PARTNER?
ZORINA
MARS RAVELO
ELPIDIO E. TORRES
KLAAANG! KLAAANG! KLAAANG!
RAVELO
bulaklak
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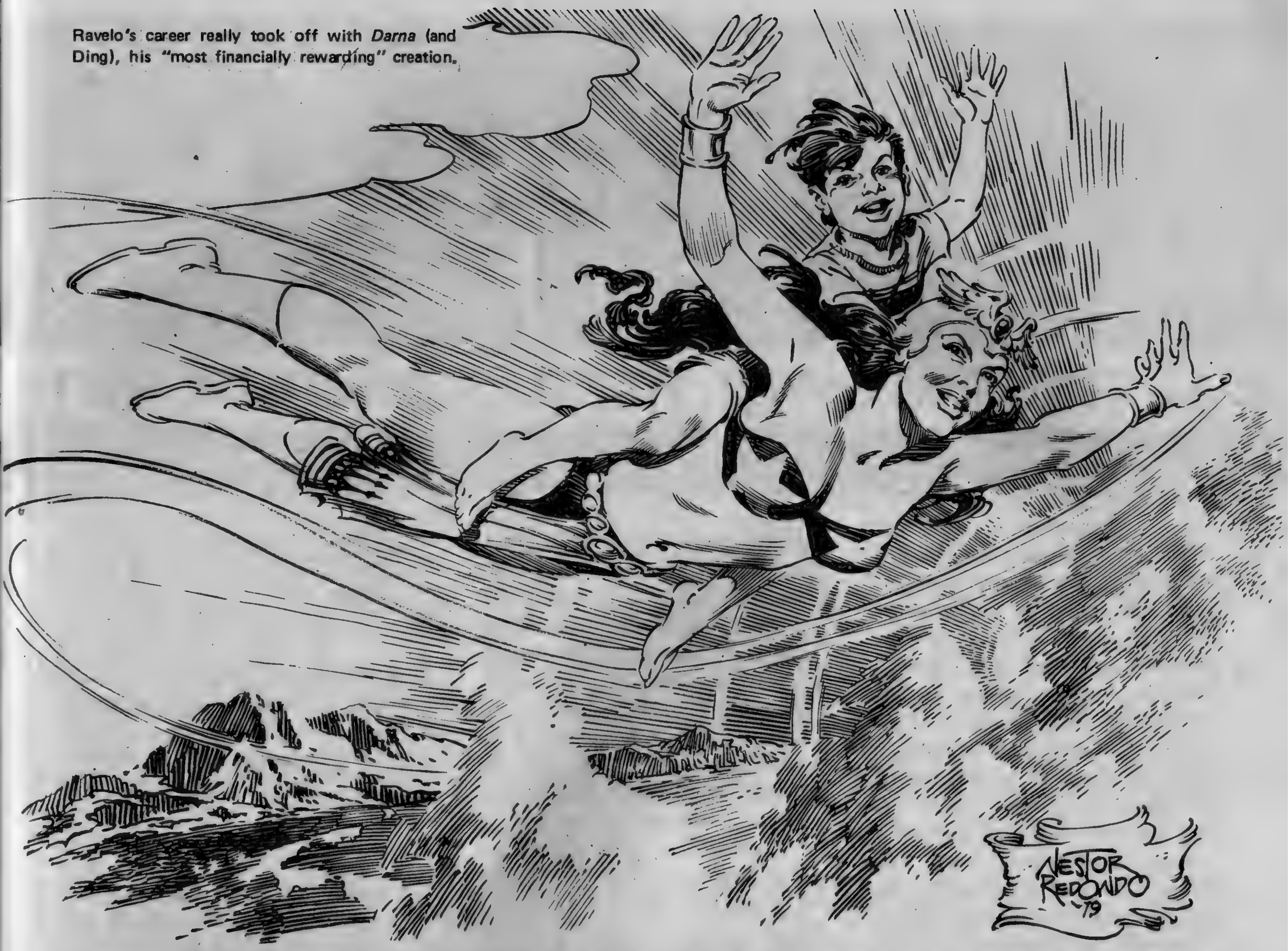
VILMA: PROVES ONCE AGAIN



Ravelo's career really took off with *Darna* (and Ding), his "most financially rewarding" creation.

Roberta had been illustrated by Elpidio Torres).

Other hit novels followed: "*Basahang Ginto*", "*Jack and Jill*." *Mambo Jambo*", *Silveria*", "*Maruja*", "*Booma*" were a few of these. And then an ironic turn of events made him give up the P10,000.00 a-month-job he was by this time enjoying at *Roces*.

Aling Bating who was responsible for giving Ravelo his first break in the field came up with a proposal: would he take over *Bulaklak? Bulaklak,* managed through the years by a cabal of non-talents, had at long last gone to where it was destined to go, given the circumstances of its ill-starred life — oblivion. Ravelo would and did.

For Ravelo it was the completion of a cycle. *Bulaklak* gave him his first big break and he was back to try to save it if possible. And save it he did, in the best comic-book fashion complete with a happy ending.

He is now the *Bulaklak Magazine* publisher, and he turns out 5 titles besides.

By all standards, Ravelo is an unqualified success: as comics writer and artist and author of novels and finally, as publisher. He earns "quite a lot" from his writings, and his magazines turn in quite a pretty penny. And he did it all by breaking idols: He was the first to break away from the American model by presenting stories purely from the Filipino point of view; he was the first to write about taboo subjects in local comics such as homosexuality and incest. And he did it with art. Or at least in the most artistic manner, without condescending or patronizing. He did it, in other words, with intelligence.

When comes such another?

ELO RAPPING WITH RAVELO RAPPING WITH

On a sweltering day in April, the Editor and company, decided to visit comicdom's "angry man", Mars Ravelo, writer, artist, editor, publisher. By turns jovial, charming, exasperated, teary-eyed, angry and reflective Ravelo revealed his thoughts on a multitude of non-related subjects. Excerpts:

ON HIS FIRST STRIP "RITA": I Patterned *"Rita"* on a real-life model, *Lilian Torres,* then aged 5, one of my neighbors in Paranaque. My strips were mostly a retelling of her antics. Incidentally, she was also my model for *"Roberta."* Lilian, you see, came from a broken home . . . *"Roberta",* if you must know, is my most memorable piece of work. I did not see the remake of *"Roberta",* which, I was told, was not too good . . . "

ON "DARNA": *"Darna"* is my most successful character, financially so far. Dolphy shelled out ₱50,000.00 for just using the *"Darna"* character in *"Darna Kuno".*

ON BEING A FILIPINO: "Filipinos are the most wonderful and at the same time the most horrible people on earth. I love being one."

ON WATCHING SHOOTINGS OF HIS NOVELS. "I have walked out of the shootings so many times. Why? Because a normal man cannot stand to see his work reduced to pure corn. And I'm normal."

ON FILM DIRECTOR LINO BROCKA: "I don't like Brocka the person. But I like Brocka the director. Among the limp-wrists, he produces the best work."

ON INFERIOR COMIC STRIPS: "The only place for inferior comics work is the garbage can."

ON WRITERS WHO WORK AT 30-PLUS NOVELS AT THE SAME TIME: "Those people are no longer human. They are just money-making machines, no more no less."

ON BEING HAPPY: "To me happiness is doing what I like to do best."

ON BEING AN ARTIST: "The artist is beyond defining. But I think for a person to be one he must have experienced suffering. And in this regard I qualify as an artist. Because I have really suffered. Readers are sometimes reduced to tears when reading my work. Because what they are reading are actually my experiences . . ."

ON BEING AN 'HIJO DE BASTARDO': "I have never experienced the love of a father. I was brought up without one. Years later when I was already well-known, my wife suggested that I give my father some "allowance", a sum of money, because he was my father after all. And I did. He would to go my home which at that time was at Philam, and he would just pick up the money and then go. This went on for some time. Then one day we had a showdown. As he came to the house I called him aside. I asked him why is it, that he behaves the way he does? He never gave me any love, did not take care of me.

I grew up in fact without his help. And now, he comes to visit us just to pick up the money. He sometimes forgets the name of my wife. As for my children, he didn't even know their names. He replied that he doesn't know why he's like that. That's just the way I am, he said. Since you obviously just come here for the money, I said, take it and go.

RAVELO RAPPING WITH RAVELO RAPPING W

And he picked up the money and left . . . . On his deathbed he was asking for me. Not for any of his 15 legitimate children, mind you. *For me* . . .My wife asked me to go. He's your father she said. I know why he's asking for me, I said bitterly. He just wants a lavish burial. Well, I didn't go."

ON TURNING DOWN A BANCOM LOAN: "I was approached by Jack Atienza who is the Bancom Movie Department president, and he said his firm is ready to bankroll any movie production that I may have in mind. I asked for conditions, and he told me what the conditions were. I decided to turn down his offer. You see, I would be doing all the hard work and Bancom would collect about half of the proceeds for doing nothing. On learning that I had turned down their offer, Jack said: *"Bago ito."*

ON WHY THERE IS SQUABBLING AMONG COMICS ARTISTS, WRITERS AND PUBLISHERS. "Dahil karamihan sa kanila ay walang pinag-aralan, o kung may pinag-aralan man, ay kulang naman . . . ."

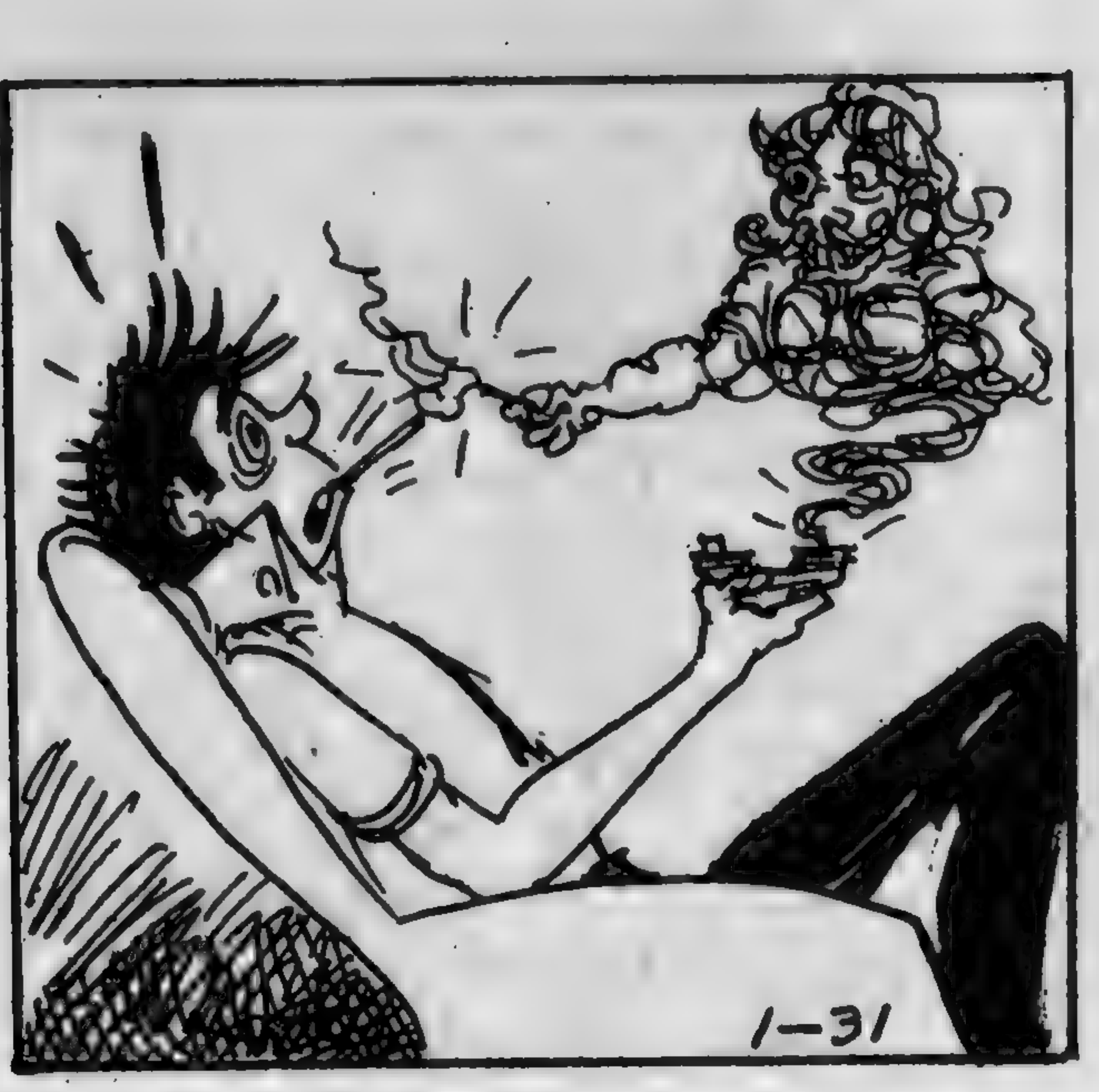
ON HIS OWN INADEQUATE EDUCATION: "I finished only the 2nd year of high school. And this fact gives me a feeling of inadequacy. I wish I had been able to finish my schooling. But given the circumstances that attended my life, I would probably repeat all the things that I did, given the chance to do it all over again."

ON BEING NO. ONE IN THE COMICS: "I'm no. 1 because I don't want to be no.2. Early in life I had decided that I would be no. 1 in everything I do. Even as a janitor/ *kubitero* in a Japanese firm before the war I was unbeatable. I always did the best work.

ON A MEETING AT THE PICC: "There was a meeting last year at the Philippine International Convention Center. The meeting was composed of 'legitimate' writers and comics writers. I had been invited to attend by Ramon Marcelino (*a leading light in local comics-* Ed.) Before the meeting opened we were formally briefed by Marcelino who told us not to question any of the speakers, who were all 'legitimate' writers. And then these writers started to lambaste us, the comics writers. I remember one of the speakers very well because he was the one who got my goat, a certain Bienvenido Lumbrera. When I couldn't take what he was saying anymore I raised up my hand to ask him questions. And my questions brought home the fact that his knowledge of comics writing was at best superficial. Marcelino's face was red. And so was Lumbrera's. I ended up by telling the audience that we, the comics writers, know the comics best. And that we do not need the advice of people who do not know anything about it, to tell us how to do our work. I got a long applause from the comics writers present."

ON WHAT HE LOOKS FOR IN COMICS ILLUSTRATION: "I look for dynamism and beauty. Sadly, these traits are no longer present in the work of the present crop of comics illustrators. They have given up art for the sake of mass-production."

ISAAC



Mr. Tinna: a Tolentino comics strip for the Philippines Herald.

"But, why me? " was the reaction of the aging fine arts professor in chuckling surprise. "I'm not even well-known in comics".

Isaac Tolentino himself did not know the reason for his sudden importance. Why we wanted to feature him in *The Philippine Comics Review* when, as he confessed, he does not consider him-

THE FIRST PHILIPPINE COMICBOOK EDITOR:

TOLENTINO

by **Sisenando P. Redondo**

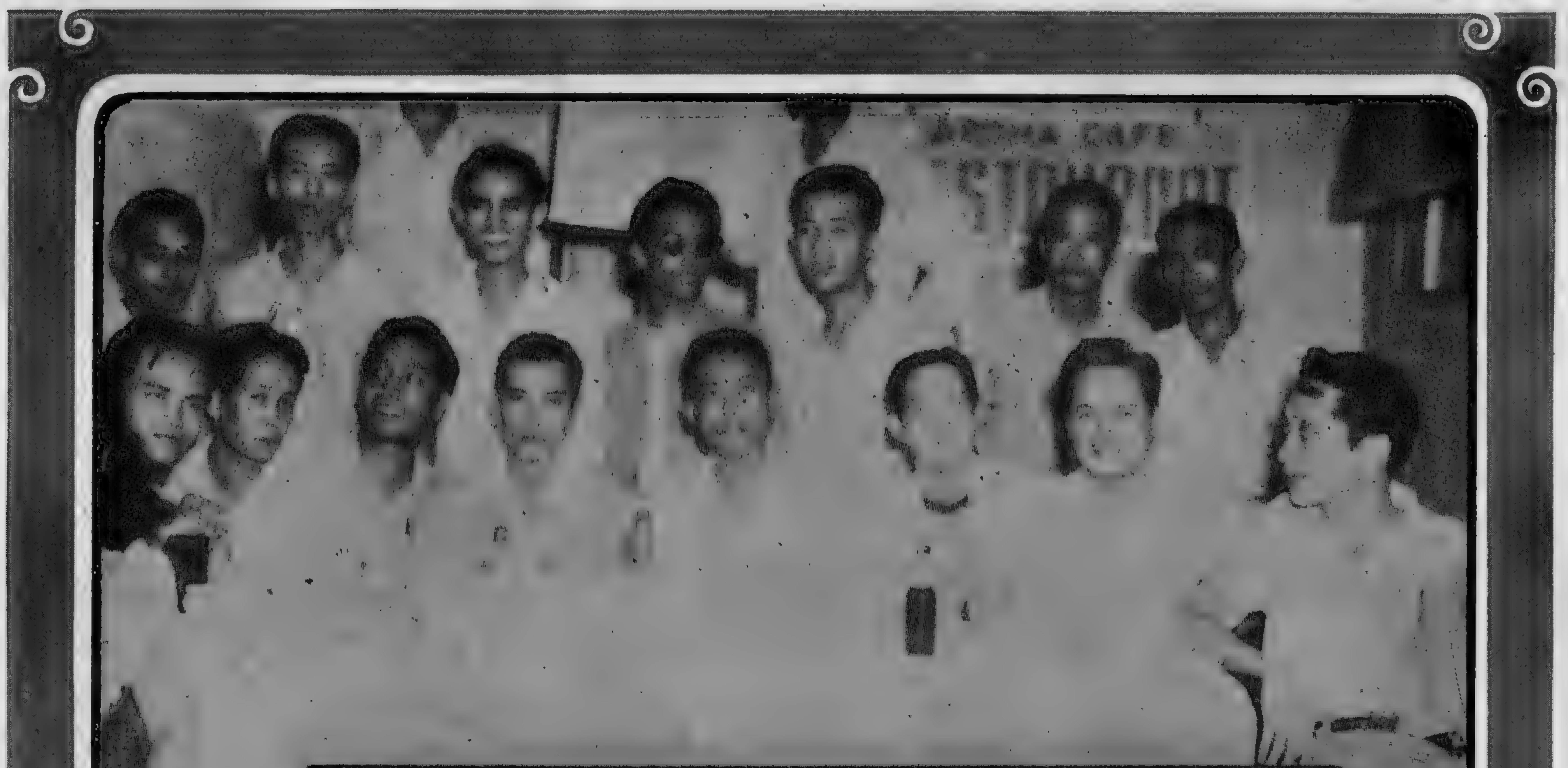
self an exponent of the trade. But, to us, his name will always be a part of the history of comics in the Philippines. He may not have achieved the greatness of a Francisco Coching, the popularity of a Mars Ravelo, or Tony Velasquez, the craftsmanship of an Alfredo Alcala, the cerebral touch of a Larry Alcala and the eminence of a Nestor Redondo, but he will always be remembered in the comics field as the first editor of the first Filipino comic book launched in the country. And that is more than worth noting.

Halakhak Komiks (meaning laughter), the first Filipino comic book, was edited by Tolentino. And *"Geslani"*, which he himself illustrated, was his first story. A lawyer and a bookstore owner, Jaime Lucas was the publisher. It can safely be claimed too, that the first Filipino comics publisher was Lucas because of that premier venture. The lawyer is now deceased.

Hunting for the professor was not easy. Tracking him bore fruit only after two previous failures, on our third visit to the Feati University where he teaches. He was cornered at the University while the fine arts students were having final examinations. He was hesitant about talking to us, but then changed his mind and granted us the interview. We rapidly started shooting questions.

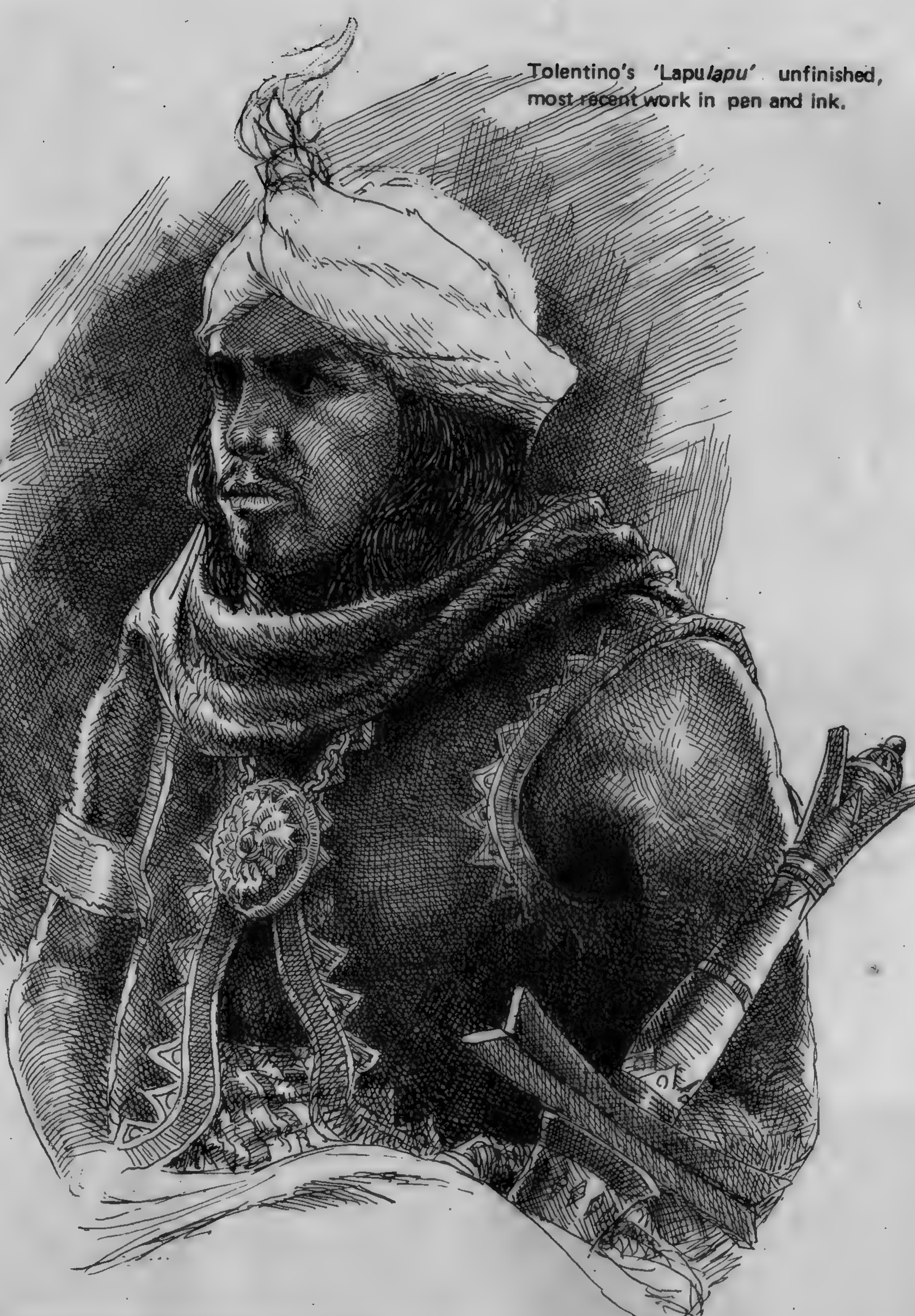
AN EDITORIAL CARTOONIST

Tolentino was not really into comics. His forte was editorial cartooning for newspapers. Except for a break brought about by *World War II*, and the *Halakhak'* stint, in late 1945 and early 1946, he had been an editorial cartoonist for more than four decades. He already had a 10-year experience in journalism behind him when Francisco Reyes' *Kulafu,* Tony Velasquez's *Kenkoy'* and Coching's *Marabini* were attracting the public. In 1935, the comics work of these three veteran artist-writers were being featured in the pages of *Liwayway*, a vernacular weekly magazine of



Rare photo shows Tolentino and comics pioneers: (first row fr. L) Gene Cabrera, Francisco Reyes, Francisco V. Coching, Tony Velasquez, Atty. Lucas (publisher), Esmeraldo Izon, Ross Chanco, Liborio Gatbonton, (2nd row) Jesse Santos, Damy Velasquez, Elmer Abustan, Lib Abreña, M. Malang-Santos, a visitor, Tolentino.

Favorite painting: the artist holds *'Mga Kalabaw'* done in oil.



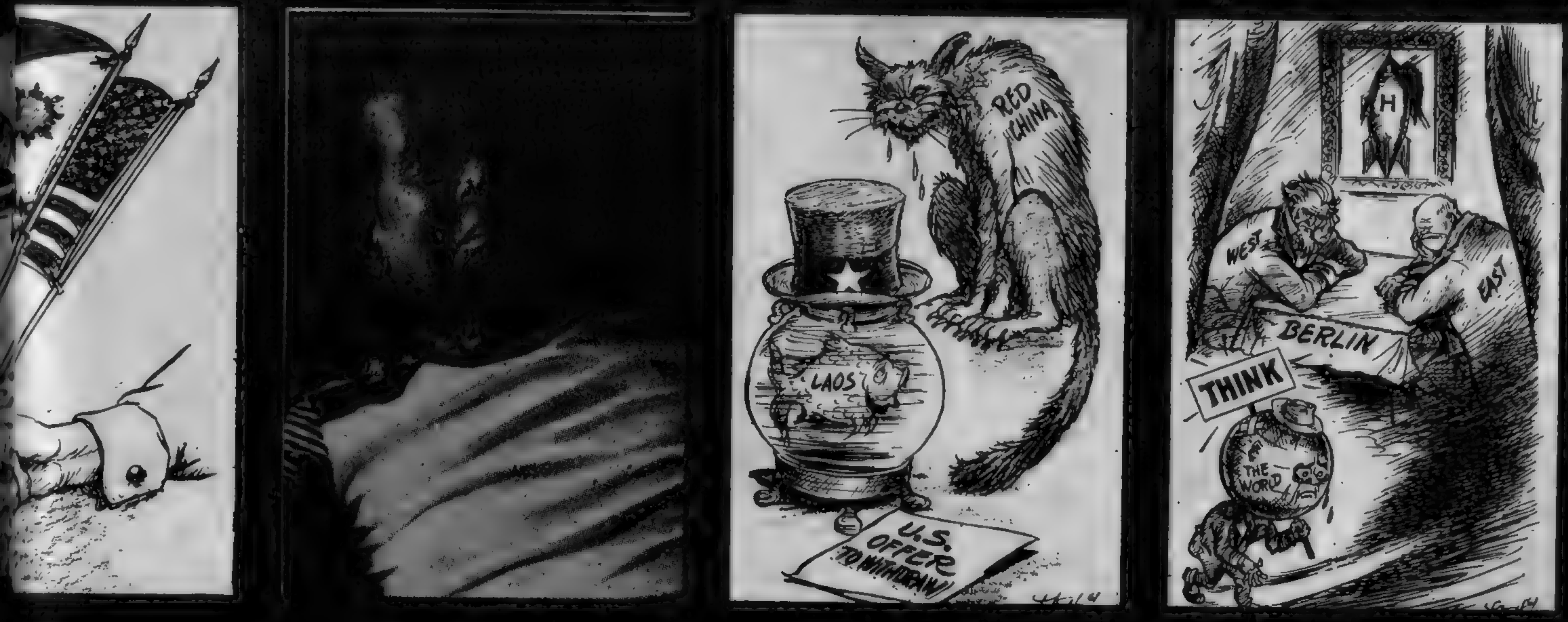
Tolentino's 'Lapu*lapu*' unfinished, most recent work in pen and ink.

the *Ramon Roces Publishing* house. There were no local comic books then, only those being imported from the U.S. And, at that time, Tolentino never dreamed of entering the comics field. He was engrossed with his cartooning at the *Philippine Free Press,* one of the Philippines' most popular general information magazines.

THE EARLY YEARS

The artist was born under the sign of Gemini, on June 3, 1905 and to Chinese astrologers, he was doubly lucky for that was the year of the snake. His roots can be traced to the tobacco-growing region of Ilocos. However, his place of birth was the aristocratic district of Ermita, Manila. He went to elementary school in Aparri, Cagayan. Then later enrolled at the Vigan Seminary College, Vigan, Ilocos Sur, where he finished high school.

Back in Manila in 1924, he enrolled at the *Escuela De Bellas Artes* (now the College of Fine Arts), University of the Philippines. Fernando Amorsolo, the master-painter, was one of Tolentino's tutors at the UP, accounting for Amorsolo's influence in his style: One that is prevalently conservative. He is fond of painting historical subjects and sun-drenched landscapes. **Pablo Amorsolo,**



Tolentino and samples of his editorial cartoons.

Fernando's brother, had a hand in molding Tolentino's artistic potential also, and so did most of the old-time painters of the roaring 20's like Peralta, Miranda and Buenaventura.

In 1925, barely through with college, but already skilled in cartooning he landed his first job at the *Philippine Tribune* a pre-war newspaper of the *TVT Group (Tribune-La Vanguardia-Taliba)*. After a three-year stint in that daily, he resigned because of a better offer from the *Philippine Free Press,* where he held the position of editorial cartoonist, a post he held until the outbreak of Word War second.

WARTIME ACTIVITIES AND LIBERATION

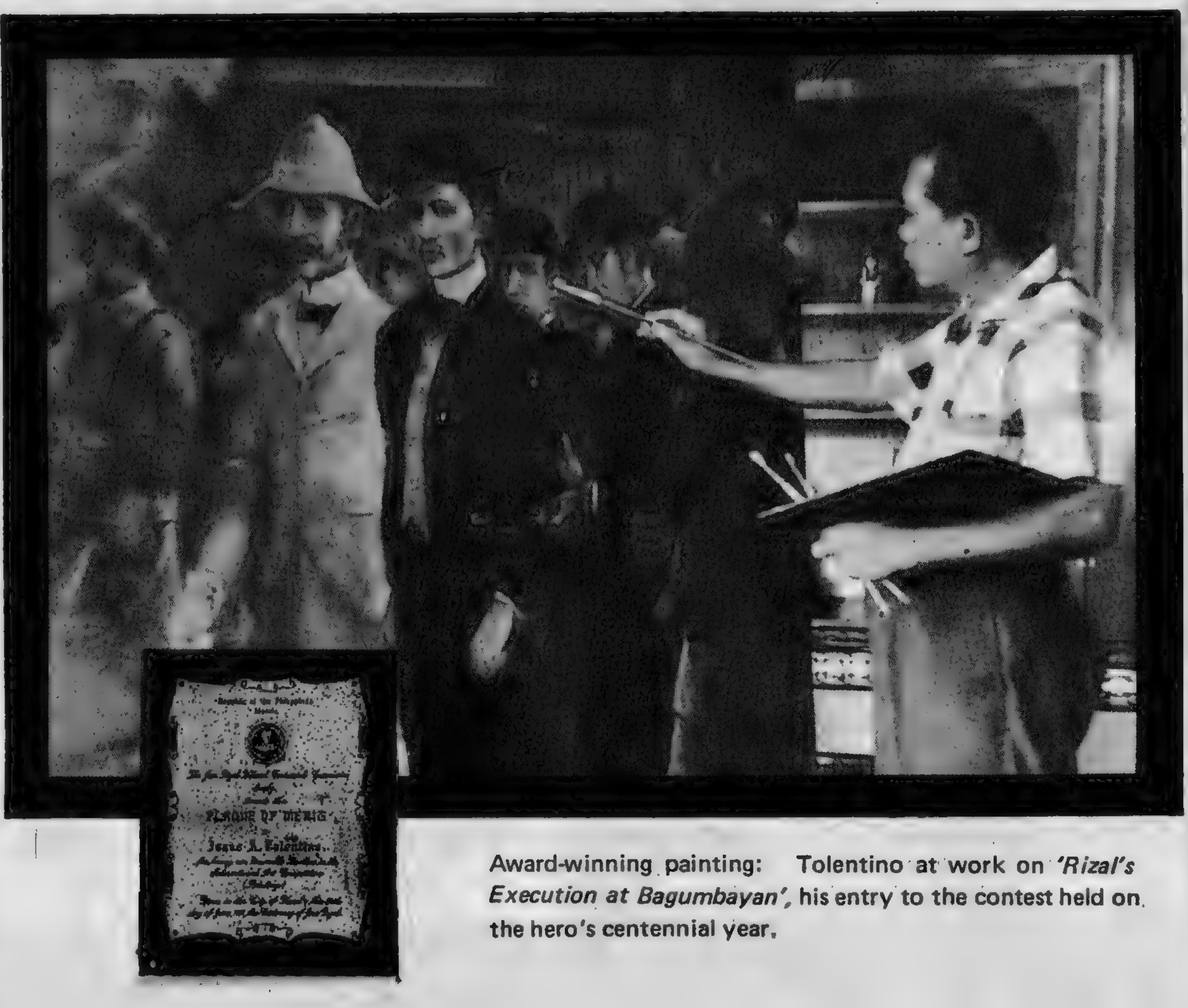
During the Japanese occupation of the Philippines, Tolentino put aside his brushes, his painting, his cartooning, and tried his hand at wielding a gun. He joined an underground unit, the President Quezon's own Guerilla (PQOG), a rag-tag band of patriots based in Dasmariñas, Cavite. The PQOG was led by Col. Vicente Umali. Members of this guerilla outfit included Hans Menzi, a newspaper publisher, Leon O. Ty, a budding journalist, also Esmeraldo Izon and Gene Cabrera, fellow artists. Almost all the *Free Press* staff members joined the group.

He was mainly involved with the publication and distribution of anti-Japanese propaganda. He also took part in intelligence work by drawing maps of Japanese gun enplacements and positions which proved invaluable to the allied cause in the final phases of the war.

When Japan surrendered and peace was finally restored, the city of Manila had been reduced to rubble. Many establishments had been levelled to the ground including the *Philippine Free Press* building where he had once worked. Strangely, the publication had not recalled him to work, though he had been promised a job. There was also scarcity of reading material at that time. Those that were being circulated around came from the US and were brought in by American soldiers. Tolentino became one of the many displaced Filipinos. His unit, the PQOG, had been disbanded earlier. He turned to his painting, but in that period of depression, who would buy the work of ANY painter? Everybody was primarily concerned with trying to survive. Providentially, he was hired by the United States Information Service (USIS) during this moment of crisis. Together with Izon he distributed news about the war to newspaper publications already operating.

THE BIRTH AND DEATH OF HALAKHAK KOMIKS

Once, while walking along Azcarraga St., (now C.M. Recto Ave.) He chanced to enter the Universal Bookstore, which was owned by Jaime Lucas, a lawyer. While browsing in the store, Tolentino met the owner. During that brief meeting with the man, Tolentino suggested that Lucas invest in a comics business. Lucas, it turned out was acquainted with the artist's work, having seen them in the pages of the *Free Press.* No one had ever thought of going into comics, and deciding that there was merit in the suggestion, decided to do so, and the plan was laid down. Soon, Tolentino was contacting all pre-war comics illustrators that he knew. He was able to convince Francisco Reyes to join them. Reyes also became his associate editor. Others who joined up were Francisco Coching, his long-time friend, Esmeraldo Izon, Gene Cabrera, Procopio Borromeo, Zabala Santos, Malang Santos, Jesse Santos, Hugo Yonzon, the Velasquez brothers (Tony and Damy), and also Larry Alcala. Lib Abrena and Pedro Coniconde, now both deceased were also with the group.



Award-winning painting: Tolentino at work on *'Rizal's Execution at Bagumbayan'*, his entry to the contest held on the hero's centennial year.

Tolentino claims that the birth of *Halakhak* was the happy result of these comics artists being thrown together at that opportuned time. ' *Halakhak* was a 42-page book printed on newsprint in black and white. It had a blue and red newsprint cover, and serials in 4-page installments. The content was variety itself. There were cartoons, love stories, mystery and adventure stories.

However, the publication faced problems: Lucas had limited capital and he lacked experience. It was only later on that he realized the ills inherent in comics publishing. The main bulk of his comic books were consigned to stallholders and newspaper dealers who, were slow in paying him – Collection was bad. After about 8 issues *Halakhak* was in danger of folding up. Distribution was excellent, but collection did not improve, and there was limited cash on hand. Tolentino decided to resign, when this state of affairs persisted. Thus ended his short career as the first Filipino comic book editor.

In 1946, Coniconde succeeded Tolentino as editor of *Halakhak* when the latter joined a newspaper outfit, *The Manila Post* and *The Manila Courier*. He was back in his element, drawing editorial cartoons and preparing layouts for the dailies. Meanwhile, Lucas, seeing the hopelessness of the situation, decided to give up. *Halakhak* officially died with the 10th issue. (Note: Just as *Halakhak* was dying, Ramon Roces, millionaire-publisher, decided to set up *Ace Publications.* It's first comics title was *Pilipino Komiks* which became the most popular comics ever published in the Philippines. Ace lived for 16 years.) The dailies, *Manila Post* and *Manila Courier,* suffered the same fate as *Halakhak*. Tolentino then joined the staff of the *Philippines Herald. The Herald* had offices in the same building as the *Tribune*, his first employer. The newspaper was his employer for two decades until his retirement in 1968.

His newspaper work had isolated him from current trends in local comics. But, once in a while, he picks up a copy and reads it through. When asked what he thinks of the present crop of artists he says: *"Maraming magagaling ngayon."* (We have plenty of talents today) He is amazed at the skill of the new breed of illustrators. This notwithstanding, he is more attuned to the painting scene. He counts the following among his favorites: Amorsolo, Juan Luna, Hidalgo, Fabian de la Rosa, Carlos Francisco, Antonio Dumlao, and dela Serna. Modern painting the abstract type, turns him off. 'Those so-called artists cannot paint," he laughs. "Do you call their work painting? Anybody can step into a pail of paint and then wipe his feet on canvass. '

He mentions Harold Foster, the creator of *Prince Valiant* and Stan Drake, the originator of the *Heart of Juliet Jones*, , as among his favorite American illustrators. He considers the two Franciscos, Reyes and Coching, as the stars during his time.

As mentioned, he loves to paint historical pictures showing a horde of people and landscapes. Most of his landscapes are reminiscences of his early life in Alacapan, Cagayan, where his family goes to escape the fast-paced life in the city. He paints fast. He can finish a picture in 4 days, 10 days, if the canvas is large. His entry to the Rizal Centennial Art Competition (which garnered an honorable mention) was painted in only 10 days. The picture now hangs at the hero's house in Calamba, Laguna. It depicts Rizal on his way to his execution, at Bagumbayan.

Tolentino is a spritely 73, and still looks able and strong. He seldom uses the elevator to get to his fifth floor classroom at the University.

The artist, wife Rosalia and granddaughter.

He teaches Anatomy, Color Theory, Architectural Visuals, Fundamental Drawings, and Illustration. The last subject is his favorite.

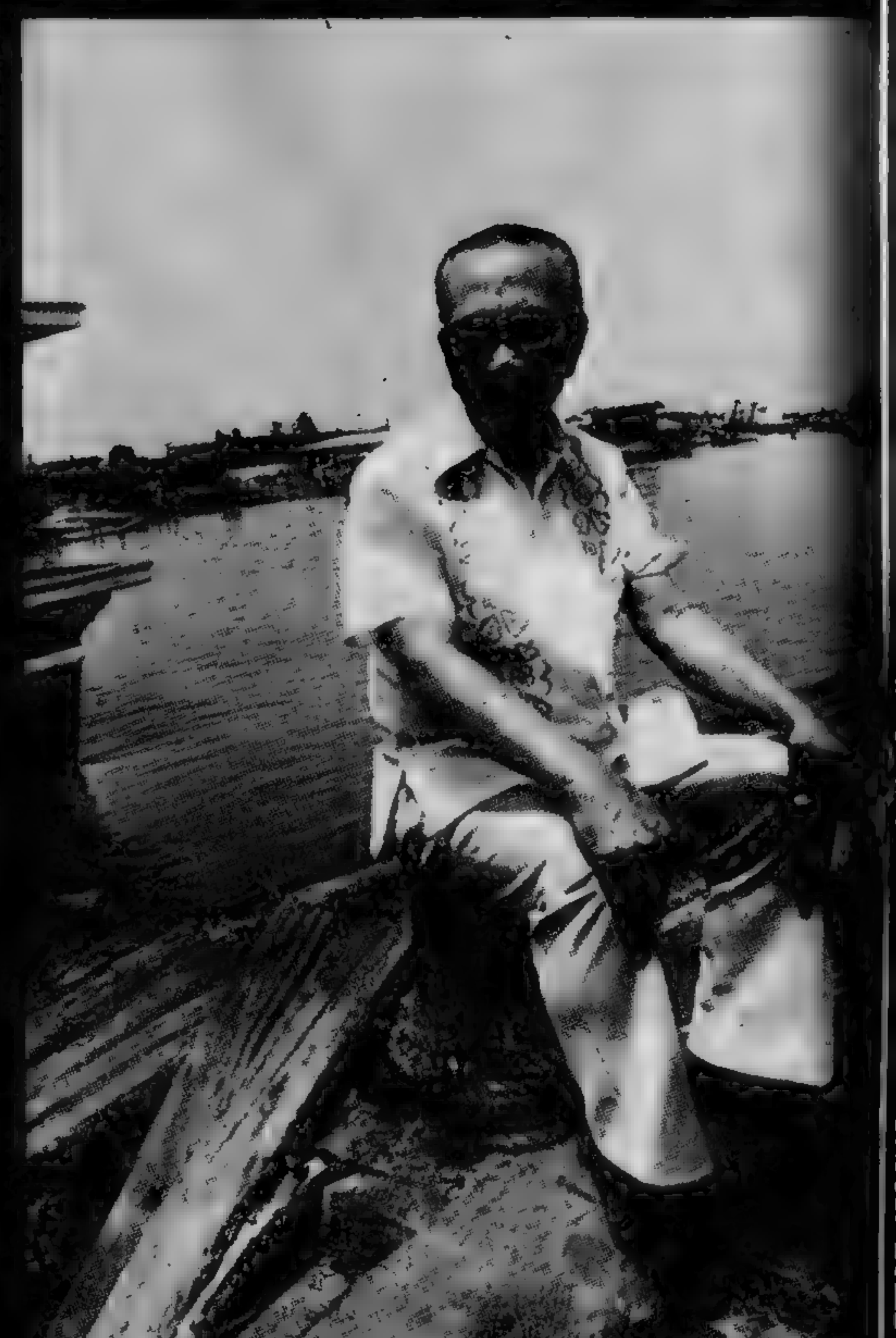
Tolentino is married to Rosalia Luna, a Batangueña. They have two boys and one girl. One of his children is following in his footsteps. Alberto, his eldest, is currently employed as a layout artist of *TV Times* magazine; devoted to the entertainment field.

Tolentino was involved with an art organization the Society of Philippine Illustrators and Cartoonist (SPIC).He was the third president of the Society. Tolentino has very few of his paintings, as he is wont to give these away to friends as gifts. Right now, a collection of 10 of his paintings are all that he has. Some of them are reproduced in these pages.

Tolentino and Dando Redondo.

Zabal

PIONEER CARTO



Zabala Santos at scenic Malabon River.

Santos

ONIST

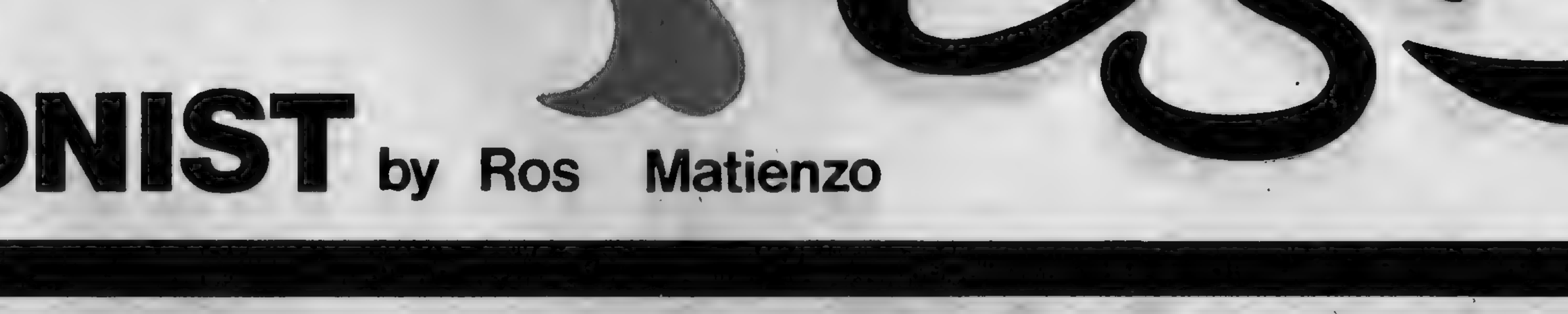
by Ros Matienzo

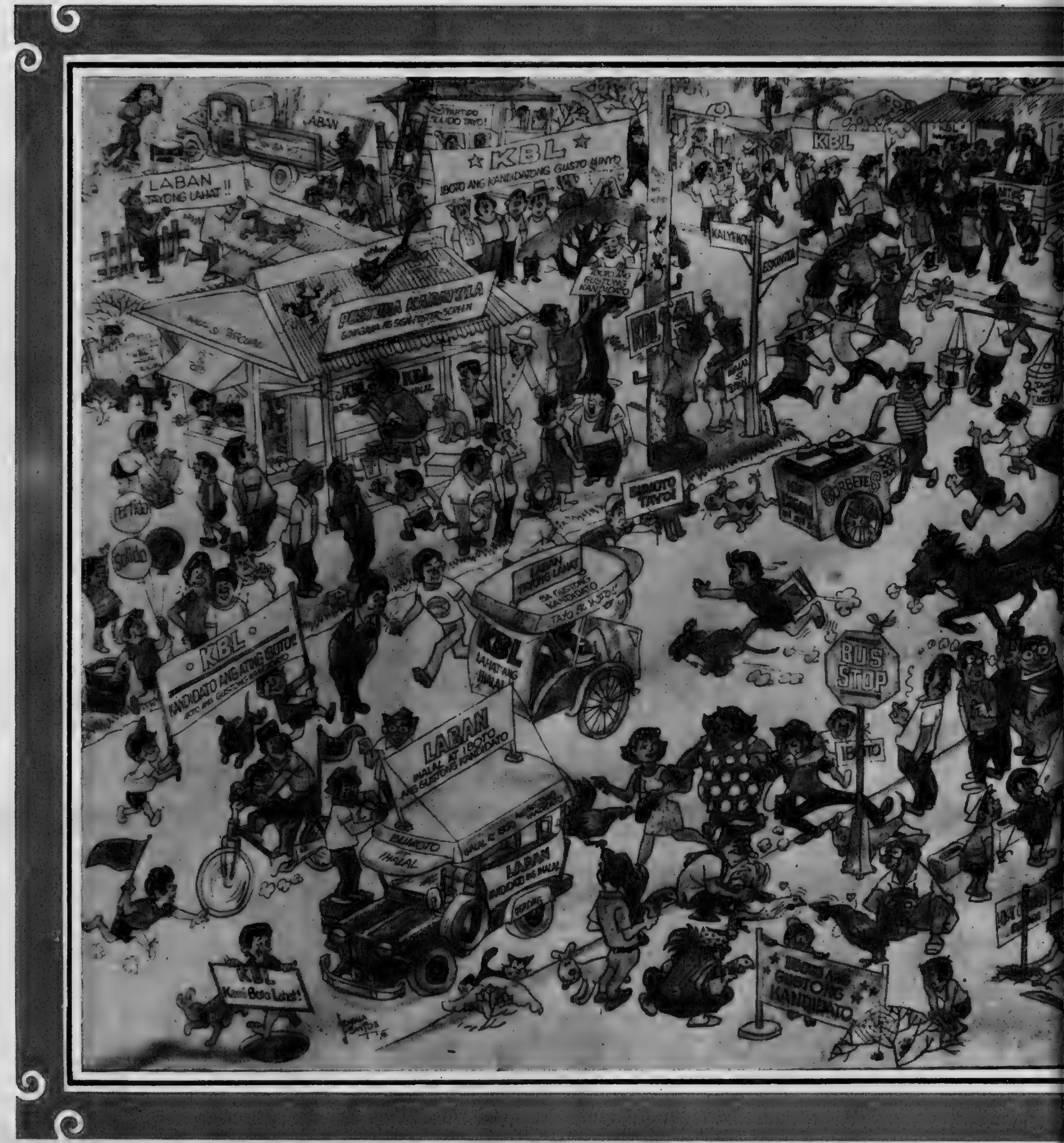
Malang, one of the eminent artists of the Philippines today, used to visit him almost everyday, to soak-in the lessons one does not learn from any art school. That was decades ago, of course, when Malang was still learning the ropes.

"Malang rarely comes anymore," said the avancular old man with no trace of rancor. "Perhaps he is just too busy . . . Time was when he used to have his lunches here, in this very house, with us . . . "

The morning was uncommonly humid. But then, we were at Kuatro Cantos, Malabon and it was mid-summer. The house where we were holding the interview was cool though.

We looked out of the open window. Some errant wind was stirring the surface of the Malabon river. There were decaying hulks of fishing boats in the distance. People were paddling across the




LABAN TAYONG LAHAT !!
LABAN
☆ KBL ☆
IBOTO ANG KANDIDATONG GUSTO NINYO
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Kami Boto Lahat!
IBOTO ANG GUSTONG KANDIDATO
Solido

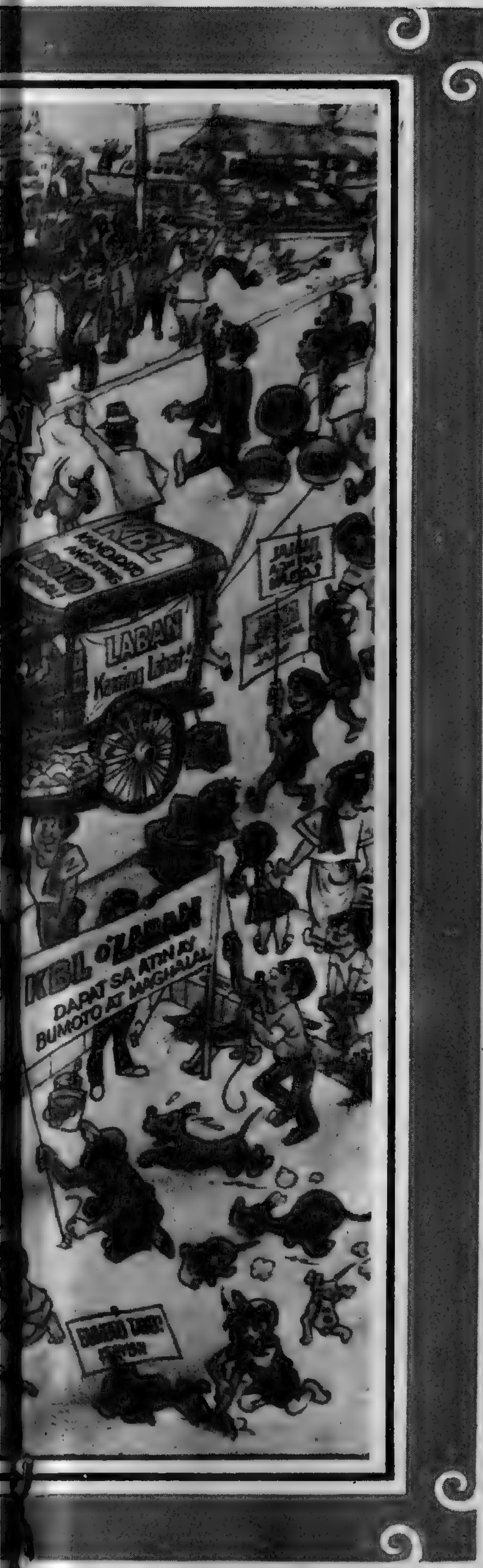
'HALALAN': One can detect here the origins of Malang's "Menageries."

river in *bancas.* The sky was blue. Everything was drenched in sunlight.

* * * * * * * *

It was a sun-drenched day, too, in Bicol, more than 3 decades ago when we sat on our mother's lap as she read to us the misadventures of *Popoy* and *Lucas Malakas.* Those were wonderful times, and we thought the adventures of the two comic characters were riotous. The adventures are still funny now. And talking with their creator, *J. Zabala-Santos,* one is not surprised at this triumph of humor, which seems to span the years. For there is a timeless quality to the man's character, as well as his cartoons.

Also his words also have a "poignancy that swiftly clutches and would not let go of the beholding heart," to use the words of poet



Erwin Castillo, as he described a work of art. And so it was, so it is now. Zabala-Santos' words, his humor, is of the type one clutches to one's heart and is loath to let go. For it has, above all, an endearing quality, one distinctly of his race.

Humor, Filipino humor, is different. And J. Zabala-Santos has mastered it. And the humor is something he *has,* constantly. Every word he says, every witticism, is laced with this humor. Coming across a couple of acquaintances who were shooting the breeze at a store he said, *"O, naka-otso na naman kayo diyan."*

Naka-otso? we asked. Yes, he said. *"Pareho naka-kuwatro, hindi ba? Dalawang kuwatro, e di otso."* *

And we laughed.

* * * * * *

J. (for Jose) Zabala-Santos broke into print with *Angko at Titina* in the pages of *Liwayway* in 1935. This was followed in 1936 with *Sianong-Sano,* which told of the antics of a half-wit. However, his most enduring characters were *Popoy* and *Lucas Malakas,* which, until recently, appeared regularly in the comics page of the *Pilipino Express.* These characters were a part of the Filipino comics reader's diet for nearly 4 decades.

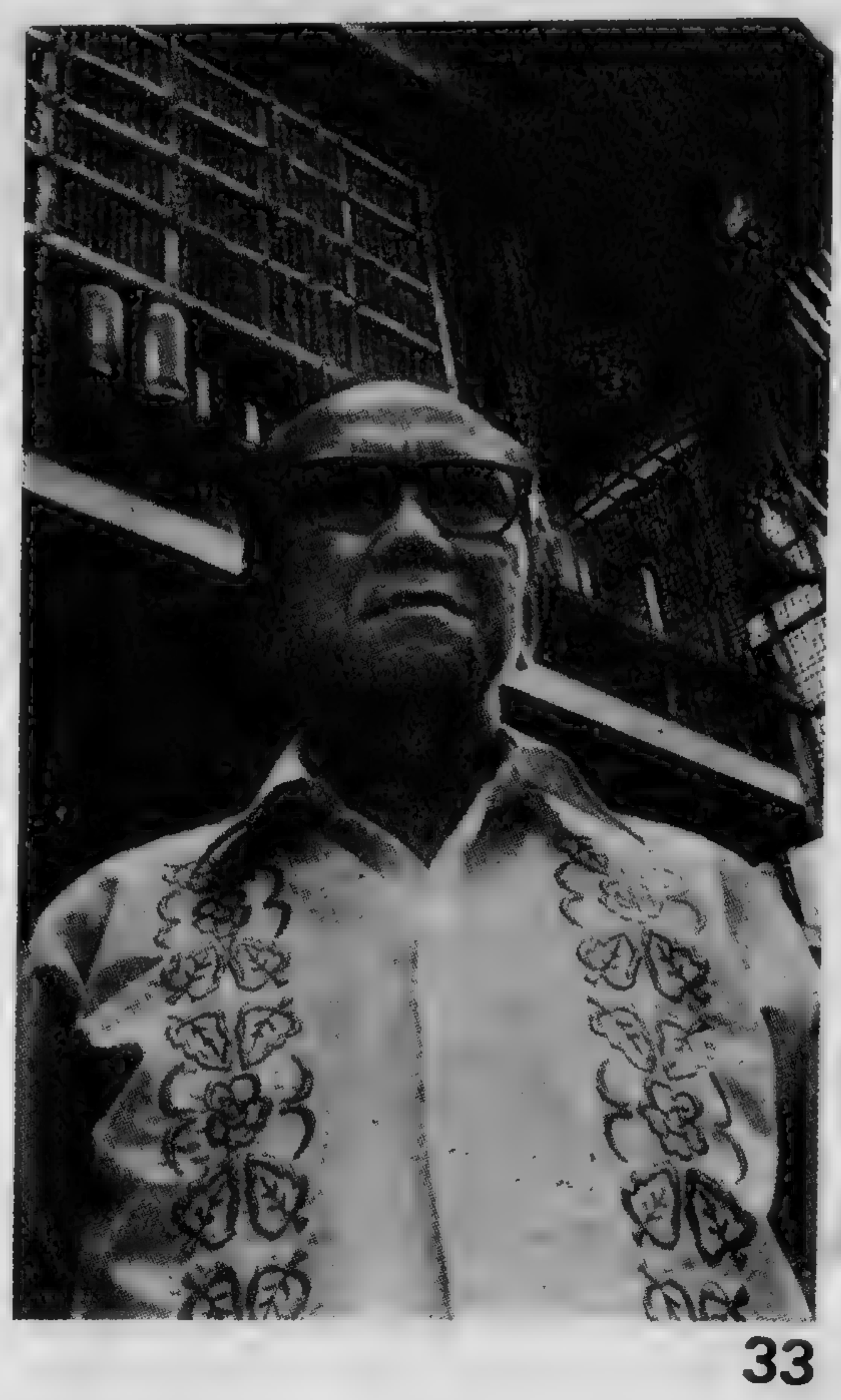
Lucas Malakas, we learned, was created at the urgings of a friend, *Pedrito Reyes.* It was Santos' answer to the then popular American cartoon strip character, *Popeye. Sianong-Sano* and *Popoy* were originals, however, and were wholly the creation of Zabala-Santos.

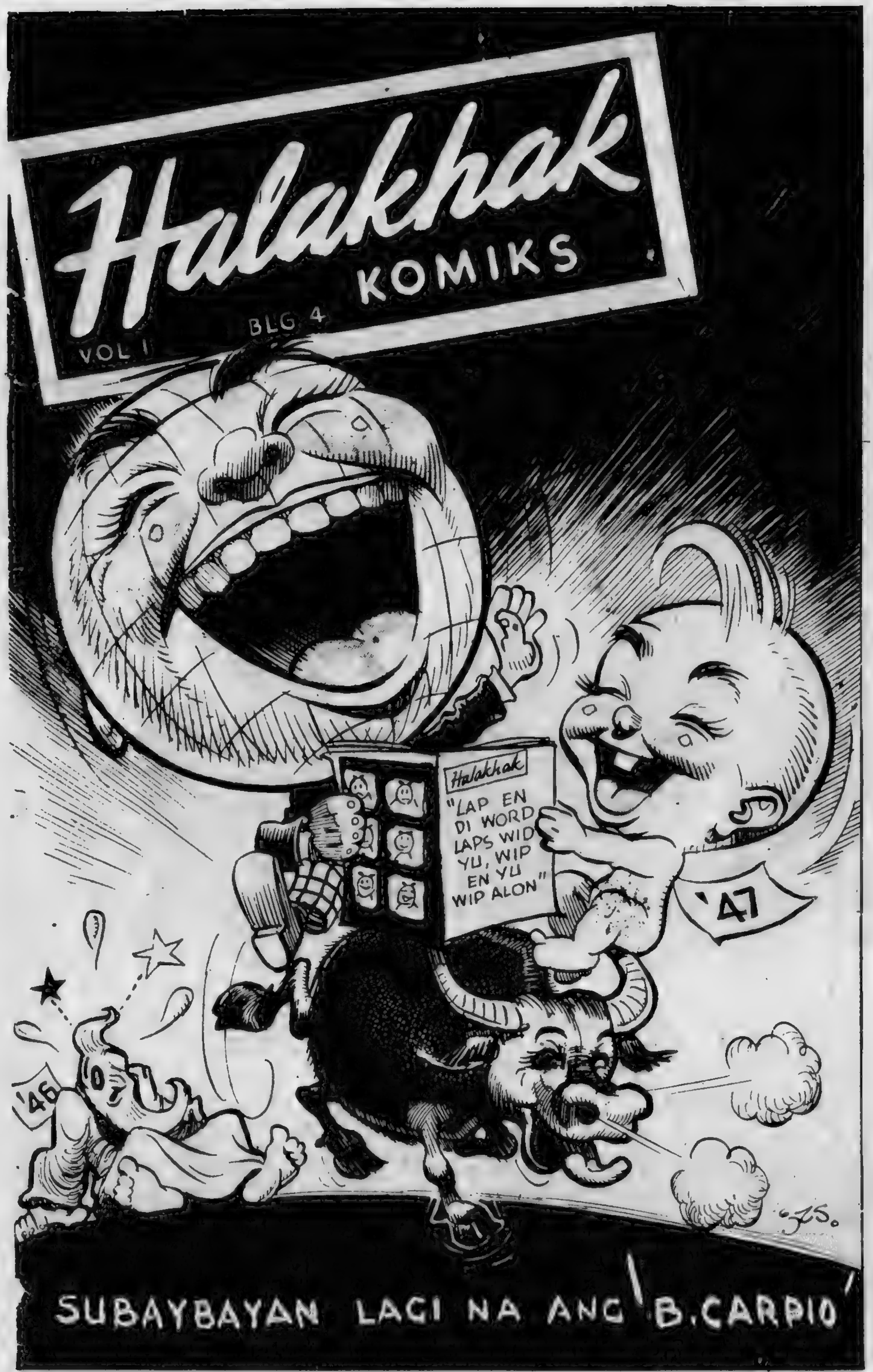
Zabala-Santos belongs to the generation which spawned the 'Golden Age' of Philippine Comics. Coching, Francisco Reyes, Tony Velasquez were all friends and associates. This group of pioneers worked continously until the outbreak of the war. There followed a hiatus, 3 years of inactivity, which saw the artists trying to survive. Zabala-Santos himself teamed up with *Manalang* during the war years and worked on outdoor advertising, in an effort to stay afloat.

At the end of the war he worked as cartoonist in the first local comic book, *Halakhak Komiks,* which was being edited by Isaac Tolentino. But this initial venture in local comics was short-lived. It died an unnatural death in its 10th issue. Later, Zabala-Santos joined *Pilipino Komiks* with *Lucas Malakas.*

As mentioned, Malang called him 'master' and so did *Nonoy ('Tisoy') Marcelo,* Zabala-Santos' own nephew. *Lib Abrena ('That's Life')* also learned from him. His influence on Malang was especially profound. One has only to view Malang's *'Menageries'* to see how closely the student has hewed to the path of the teacher. Zabala-Santos' house, then, hummed with activity and discussions about art, as the budding artists found his home a good place to meet. These days however, the master prefers solitude. He confesses to being "tired", for car-

Artist Zabala—Santos in the shadow of an antique house.



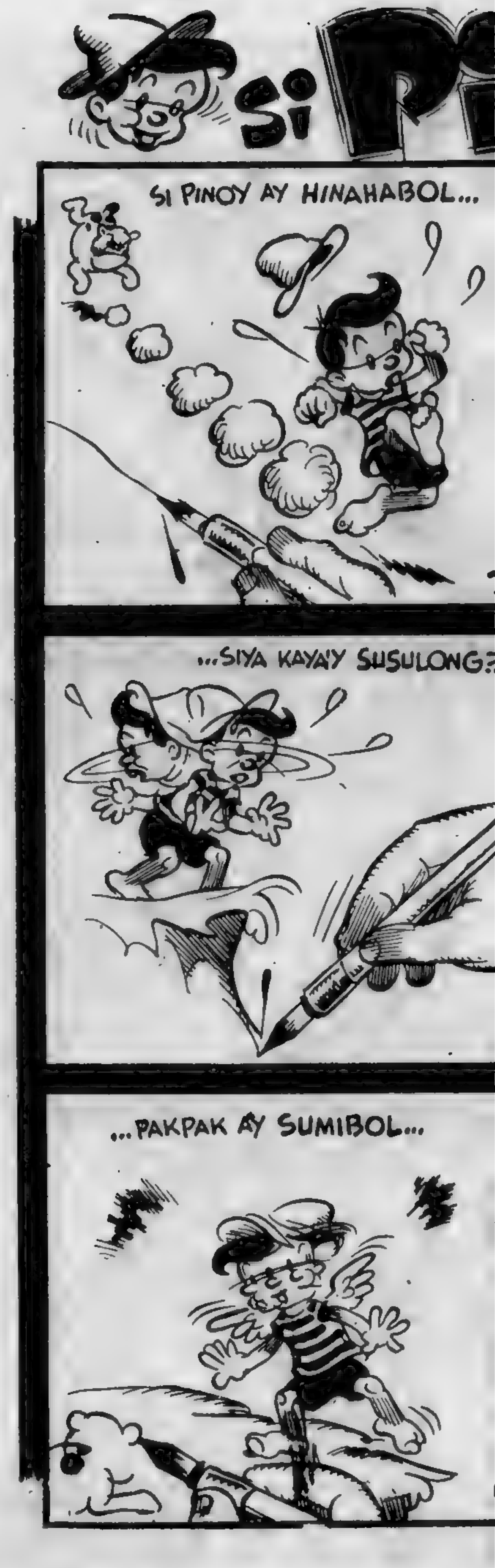

Halakhak
KOMIKS
VOL I
BLG 4
Halakhak
"LAP EN DI WORD LAPS WID YU, WIP EN YU WIP ALON"
'47
'46
SUBAYBAYAN LAGI NA ANG 'B.CARPIO'

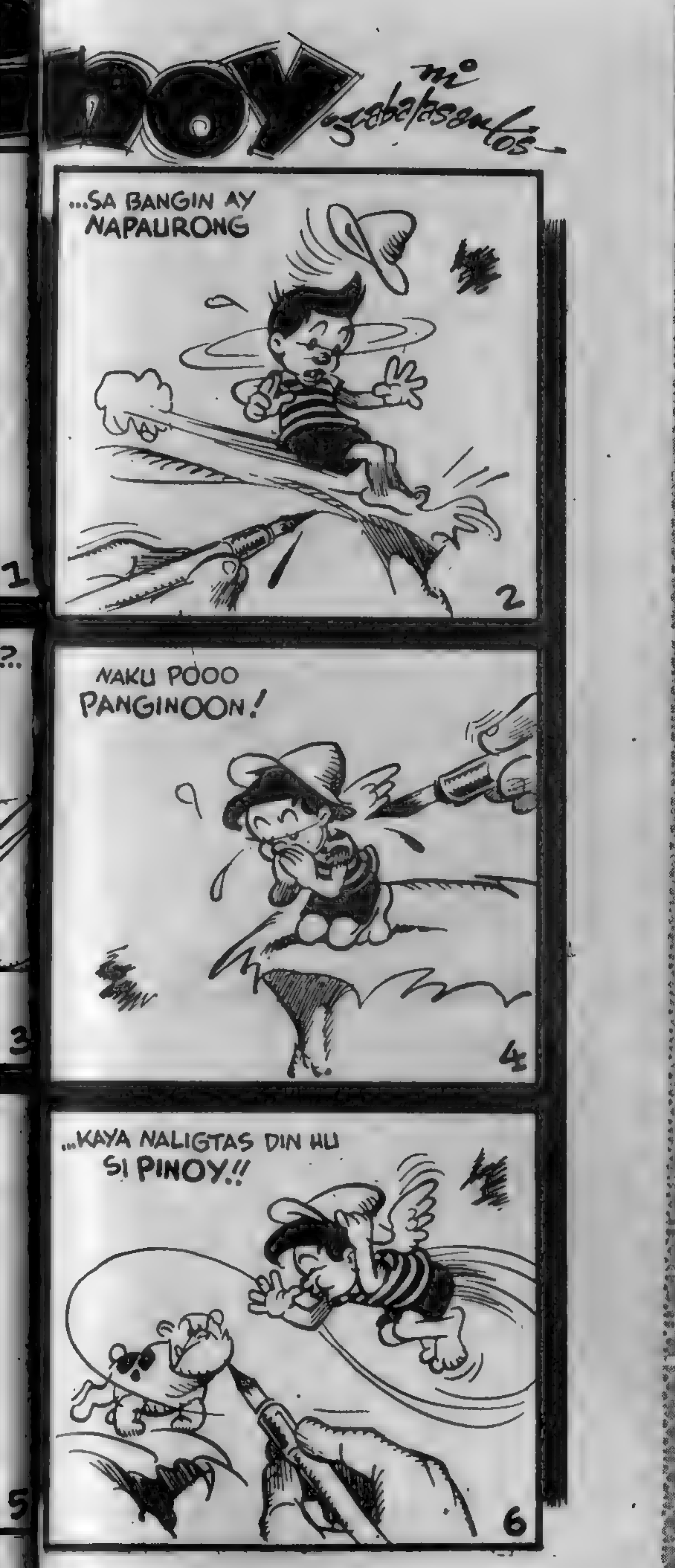
Above, a cover of *Halakhak Komiks,* the first local comicbook, by Zabala–Santos.

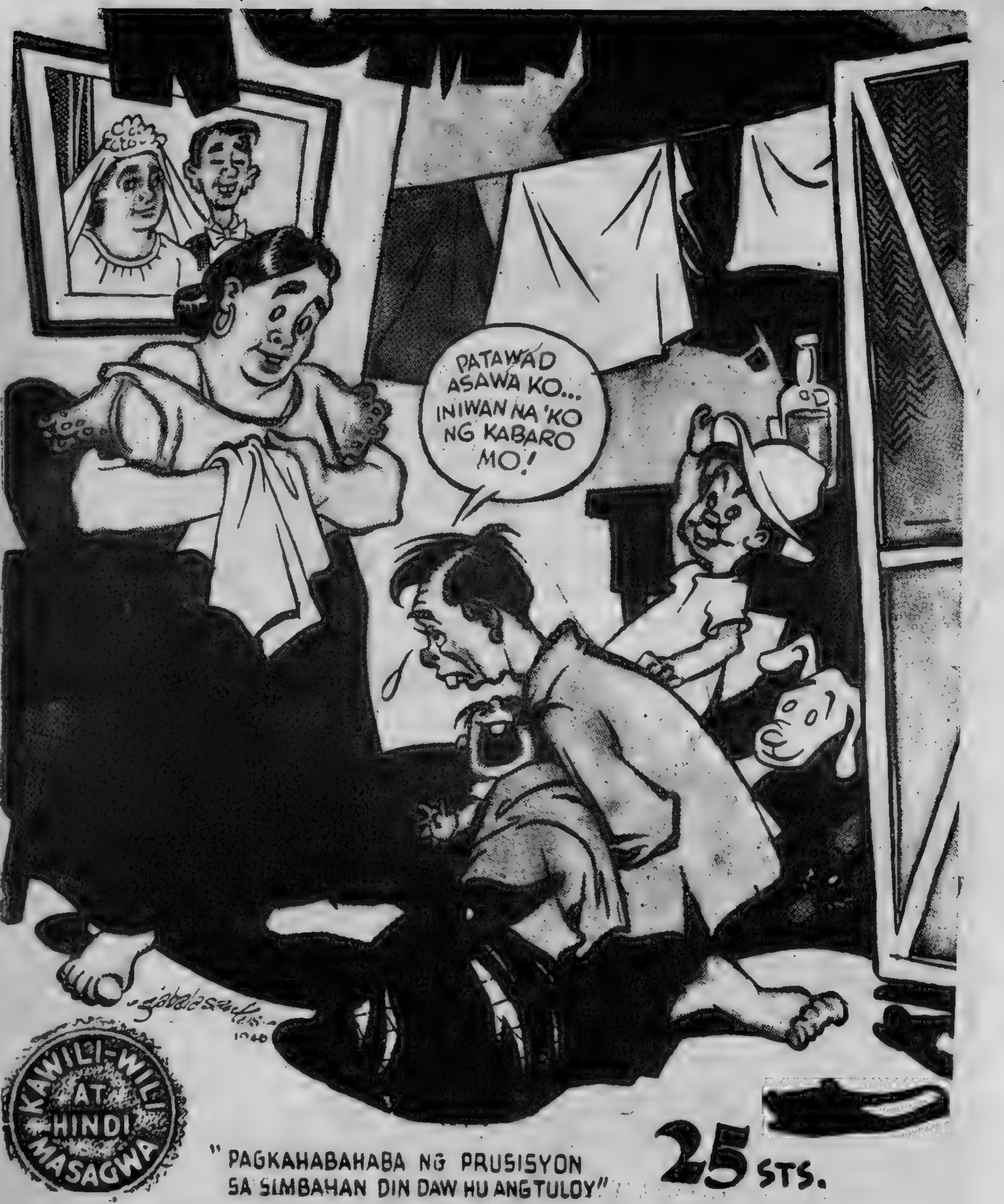
tooning is a "tiring occupation."

Zabala-Santos, or *Mang Pepe,* as he prefers to be called, born in Calumpit, Bulacan of Pangasinan ancestors, is 68 years old. He works for *Archipelago Magazine* and the vernacular *Kapaligiran.* He also does piece work for *Aklat Adarna.*

Tired though he is, and a survivor of a heart attack (which took place in September 1978), he does not intend to slow down. He still sketches to keep his fingers nimble. He does his sketching inside the jeepney, as he goes to work. He sketches his fellow-passengers, to the delight of everyone.


SI PINOY AY HINAHABOL...
...SIYA KAYA'Y SUSULONG?
...PAKPAK AY SUMIBOL...


noy
ni zabalasantos
...SA BANGIN AY NAPAURONG
2
NAKU POOO PANGINOON!
4
...KAYA NALIGTAS DIN HU SI PINOY.!!
6


PATAWAD ASAWA KO... INIWAN NA 'KO NG KABARO MO!
KAWILI-WILI AT HINDI MASAGWA
"PAGKAHABAHABA NG PRUSISYON SA SIMBAHAN DIN DAW HU ANGTULOY"
25 STS.

Samples of Zabala—Santos' art. Above: a cover of *Pilipino Komiks.* Above (L): *Pinoy,* which told of boyhood hi-jinks. Below (L): the artist in his studio.

Making people happy, it seems, will always occupy the time and mind of this pioneering genius.

* * * * * * * *

Listen to his words, for they are full of wisdom: "I do not know whether to be happy or sad at the state of local comics today. There is no realism in them, either in the stories or the style of execution, there is only fantasy . . . But then it just may be that that is the style in demand today . . .

"On TV there's too much violence, that it depresses. We are living in hard times. Do the entertainment people have to make it worse by dishing out violent shows? . . .

"In the movies there's too much emphasis on man's inhumanity to man . . . One goes to the movies to forget problems, and then he is treated to the spectacle of a woman being beheaded *('The Silent Partner').*

"They should present more musicals, and the *komiks* has to have more humor. That, as I recall, was the *Komiks'* initial reason for being . . . "

NUTS & BOLTS

By Enika & Eringa

SPIC HOLDS ART SHOW/

The first art show to be sponsored by SPIC (Society of Philippine Illustrators and Cartoonists) took place at the Hilton Hotel last August 25. It was the first SPIC show in seven years. The cooperating firms included the aforementioned Hotel and the RFM Corporation. Guest of honor was award-winning actress Charo Santos.

In a pre-show interview, Pol Galvez, SPIC president said: "This is the first time in seven years that the SPIC has surfaced to hold an art show. The coming attractions will even be bigger and better."

The next show is tentatively set for October.

Award-winning actress Charo Santos (center) was guest of honor at SPIC art show. She was assisted in the ribbon-cutting chore by Bombong Asturias (2nd from L). Alex Niño (ext. L) Francisco V. Coching (ext. R) and Pol Galvez (2nd fr. R) were among 20 participants in the show.

10TH SAN DIEGO COMICON AFTERMATH

Philippine Artist Nestor Redondo brought home the prestigious Inkpot Award, Comicdom's 'Oscar.' Redondo was given the award during the recent Comics Convention at San Diego, California, in appreciation of past achievements in the field.

He was the only Asian among 12 other awardees.

Pit Capili PCR staff photog meets Nestor Redondo at airport. Redondo went to the States as guest of the San Diego Comics Convention.

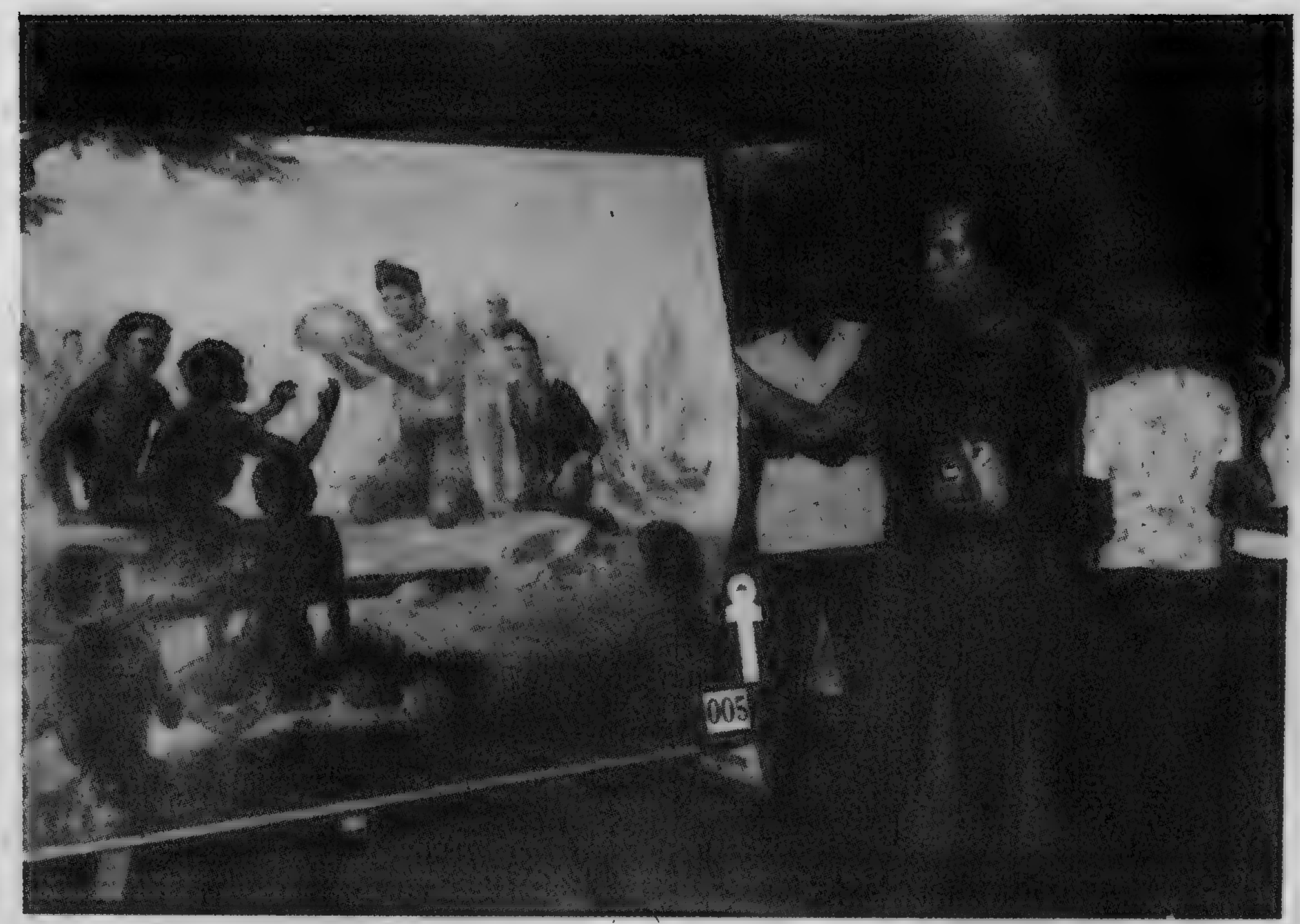
GEROCHE WINS MARIKUDO CONTEST

A bit of good news comes from Iloilo City. *Arturo Geroche,* a former artist of the Redondo Studio, has won the first prize of a recently-concluded contest. Dubbed the 'Marikudo Contest,' the activity was organized to commemorate the founding of Iloilo province. The contest was held last June 15, 1979.

Geroche, who is now senior artist and acting art director of *Yuhum* magazine, a Visayan vernacular weekly, received the winner's trophy and a cash award of P5,000.00. There's an interesting sidelight to Geroche's successful bid for the first prize spot and we would like to share this with our readers.

Last June 11 Editor Ros Matienzo passed by Iloilo City and sought out Geroche, whom he had last seen at the offices of *Atlas Publications* several months back. Said Matienzo: "I went to the offices of *Yuhum* magazine, looking for Toro (Geroche), but he was not around. So I left a note telling him where I could be reached."

"The next night there was a knock and when I opened the door Toro and a friend were there, grinning like the cat who ate the canary.



Arturo (Toro) Geroche (and his masterpiece): having the last laugh.

Toro then invited me to his home, at Jaro. He said he wanted me to see his entry to the 'Marikudo Contest.

"He showed me his masterwork which was painted on a whole board of, if I recall correctly, masonite or lawanit, and it depicted the barter of Panay: a group of *Itas* on the left and Malays on the right. At the center of the picture were the main characters, *Marikudo,* the Ita King, and *Datu Puti,* the Bornean chieftain. Marikudo is shown in the act of receiving a golden *salakot* from Puti. The background shows the sailing vessels of the Borneans.

'Toro asked me for my opinion, what I thought of his painting, and I said that the painting was very well done, the composition was taut. I added, though that the presentation was too 'unoriginal.' I remember saying that the other contestants would probably depict the barter of Panay the same way with Marikudo receiving the *salakot* from Puti.

"If I had done it, I said, I would have shown another scene, that one immediately after Marikudo had received the gift – with Marikudo trying on the *salakot* for size and Maniwangtiwan, his wife, dancing with joy as she displays the necklace of gold which the Borneans had given her, all of which, by the way, history mentions.

"Toro replied that he does not have time anymore to change the scene, as the contest was just 4 days away. I said to just hope for the best. I am glad to know that in spite of my comments Toro won. That prize could not have gone to a better man . . ."

RIGHTS of ARTISTS

Some people, especially publishers, would probably raise their eyebrows, to learn that artists have *rights.* You see, it has long been the practice of publishers to ignore rights (if they know at all that the artists possess any), of these poor exploited group. But personally, we would like to believe that the artists were not able to insist on rights because they were not aware that some are in existence to protect them. And we are also inclined to give such benefit of the doubt to the publishers, that they, too, were not aware that certain rights are given by law to artists who work for them.

Here then, are a few questions about artists rights, and some answers.

Q: IS THERE A COPYRIGHT LAW?

A: Yes. The Copyright Law is embodied in Presidential Decree No. 49. It covers, among other things, "works of drawing, painting, architecture, sculpture, engraving, lithography, and other works of art; reproduction of a work of art . . . "

Q: TO WHOM IS A COPYRIGHT? GIVEN?

A: A copyright is given to a creator or his heirs and assigns, or if it is a co-production by two or three artists, the copyright is owned by them jointly.

Q: HOW ABOUT COMMISSIONED WORK?

A: The work itself is owned by the one commissioning. But the rights are shared by both of them, by the person commissioning and the artist, unless otherwise stipulated by the artist.

We will continue discussing the rights of artists in our next issue. *ABANGAN!*

* * *

To be continued

A lust for experi

nent...

O'S art?

In 1959, a *medical student* in his late teens walked into the office of *Extra Komiks*, unfamiliar with the kind of people he would be dealing with in the business. He had abandoned his medical studies for what seemed to him a glamorous profession. Tucked under one arm was a rolled bristol board on which he had drawn what he believed was a sample of his best works. He was shown to the editor and, holding his breath, he eagerly unrolled his sample an illustration of a Superman-type of character. The editor took one quick, skeptical look at the young medical student's drawing and handing it back to him, sarcastically remarked: *"Dapat magpunta ka sa Amerika. Doon bagay ang gawa mo."* (You should go to America. Your work is more suited there.)

Little did the editor (a certain Ramon Marcelino) suspect, that 20 years later his words would come true.

Today, Alexander Niño is considered as one of the best comics illustrators in the United States. If he is highly rated by both editors and critics over there, he is higher enthroned by legions of fans. And among whom are American illustrators who are being influenced by his unique style. A representative volume of his works hangs at the Comics Hall of Fame in San Diego, California; and his name is listed in *Who's Who In Comics,* a publication of the American comics industry. As if these were not enough, *Warren Publishing,* publisher of *Vampirella, Eerie* and *1984* presented Niño the *Best All-around Artist Award of 1978.*

The Dark Suns Of Gruaga, a 10-plate portfolio of Niño's art, published by Schanes and Schanes of San Diego, California, and the book *Satan's Tears,* a compilation of his local and foreign works, published by the Land of Enchantment Publication of Detroit, Michigan, was bought by fans like the proverbial hot cakes.

Fanzine enthusiast Orvy Jundis writes in his article in *Jassoomian,* an Edgar Rice Burroughs publication: "[Niño's] *Gruaga* is one of the most imaginative visualizations of a novel to appear in the [Philippins]." Gil Kane, a veteran storywriter and illustrator, in addition to being the creator of *Star Hawks* and *His Name Is Savage,* told Gary Groth in an interview "I think Niño is absolutely marvelous."

But for all these accolades Niño was a near flop in his own country. Before his vindiction in the United States, local editors and publishers, almost to a man, downgraded his art and compensated his efforts accordingly.

"At *GMS Publications,"*' Niño disgustedly recalled"I was only getting ₱9 per page but still Letty Santiago, the owner, wanted to bring that down to ₱7. That was like a slap on my face, a slap I did not deserve." In contrast to local publishers' rate, Niño's US paycheck runs as much as $130 per page for a black and white illustration. His acrylic paintings on canvass commanded prices that are unreachable dreams for many a veteran local illustrator.

Niño, however, disclosed that some foreigners are no different from local exploiters. When he flew to the United States in 1976 – his second trip actually - to scout for more and bigger contracts, an editor tried to hold him by the neck, warning him not to "fish around." At any rate, his next trip to the States will be to collect royalty from the sale of his *Satan's Tears.* Should one try to convert Niño's dollar earnings from his book and commissioned works into pesos, it would be quite easy to figure out his edge over many of his fellow Filipino illustrators' earnings. Life, however had not always been kind to Niño. There is a certain tenacity with which he has always clung to his art - no matter that skeptics view his art as preposterous and eccentric. This tenacity almost failed to pay off. Niño recalled the incident that made Mars Ravelo ban him from his publication's Ravelo gave him the script of a sob story for the publication's Christmas issue. Instead of giving it the usual treatment, Niño promptly presented the characters in his own unique way. This, not surprisingly, sent Ravelo into a fit, decrying the ruin done to the script. The story it seemed, was supposed to evoke sympathy for the characters and not to make them appear ridiculous caricatures. Niño tried to reason with Ravelo saying that he was inspired by Walt Disney's *Cinderella* and *Snow White And The Seven Dwarfs,* taking pains to point out how Disney could effectively arouse sadness in the viewer through a highly stylized visual presentation. Ravelo was not convinced because he was too set on how to do things. He shut his doors on Niño.

It took years before Niño could muster enough courage to show his face again at Ravelo's office. He tagged along with felllow artist Tony Caravana, who went into pick up a script to illustrate. The meeting did not turn out as a let-bygones-be-bygones affair as Niño hoped: Ravelo had no script for him that day - or for all the days to come, it seemed. Worse, an unspoken conspiracy seemed to him to have united all other comics publishers to ban Niño from their premises. If there had been any left willing to take him in, the pay would not have been worth his effort.

Those were hard times for Niño and if it is any consolation for many illustrators as well. The almost total suspension of scripts for release to illustrators, which one could surmise to have been imposed by the vagaries of the industry's economic politics, further compounded Niño's predicament.

In desperation, he took to writing and illustrating his own stories and hurried off to *Affiliated Publications.* Where he was given the run-around.

Once when Niño made a follow-up, Rene Villaroman, an editorial staffer, told him that his work had been coursed to the higher echelon for approval. He proceeded to Sulpicio Antipala, the manager, who told him that it was already approved and had been handed over to Carlo Caparas, another editorial staffer. Caparas pointed his finger to still another staffer, 'Tony' Tenorio, who pointed his finger back to Villaroman. Niño wised-up at once. He stormed home to Tarlac, on borrowed bus fare, frustrated and angry.

But a good man is hard to put down. One day, after finishing off a bottle of rum - he had been driven to drink by frustration – Niño met Leandro Martinez, the creator of *Nognog,* who advised him to see Pablo S. Gomez, the publisher of *United* and *Universal Komiks.*

"I owe Mang Pabling [Gomez] a lot. He saved me from total depression," Niño disclosed. At *PSG* Publications, he illustrated *Gruaga* and *Mga Matang Nagliliyab,* which both showed the first blooming of genuine artistry allowed the free reign of expression. Gomez, a perceptive publisher-writer, ins-

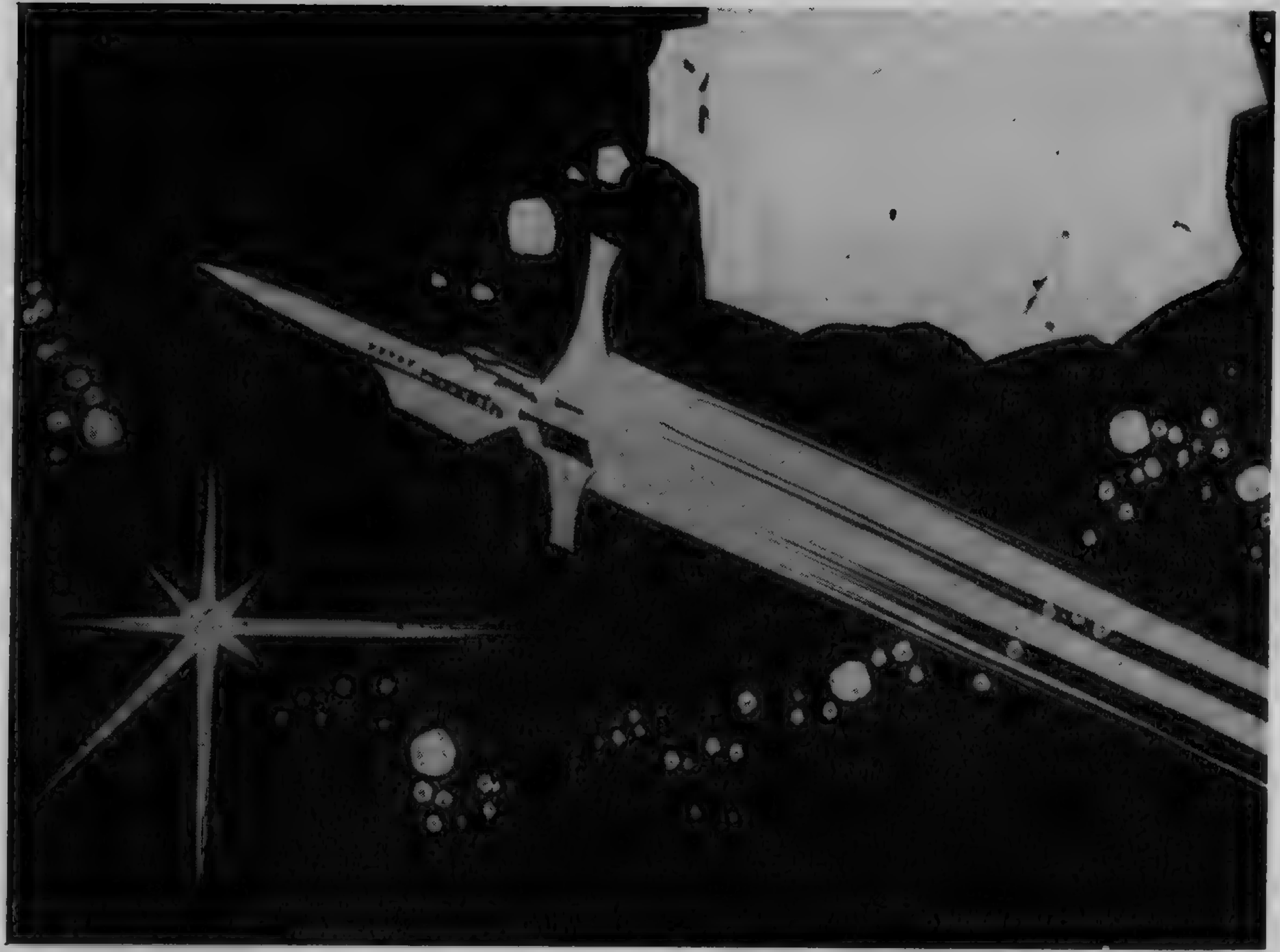
The artist (2nd fr. R) clows with friends.

tinctively recognized this. He gave Niño a freehand. It was also around this time, 1968, that Niño illustrated the horror novel *Maligno*, and some short stories for *Craf Publications, Inc.*

A few years later, Niño got his first shot at working for American comics. And, with the growing evidence of a more artistically and financially lucrative career in that direction, he started drifting away from the local comics. His professional team-up with Gomez ended with *Mariposang Dagat*, a novel which was serialized in *Liwayway Magasin* in 1975 and was later made into a movie. Incidentally, *Mariposa*, where Niño earned ₱25 per page, the highest rate at that time, was also his last work for the local comics.

The man responsible for launching Niño's career in the US was Tony de Zuñiga, who, after a successful stint abroad, came home to the Philippines with his American wife in 1971. The visit was purely business. Zuñiga had interested his employers at *DC* about the country's reservoir of comics talent that they sent him over to scout around for illustrators and bring back samples of their works. Niño's work was among those approved together with the works of Nestor Redondo and Alfredo Alcala. Fan letters which poured into the *DC* office were all praises for the new discoveries.

Alex Niño's passport into the US comics scene in 1971 was a full-color illustration of a script for the *DC National Periodicals*. The Tale entitled, *To Die For Magda*, a 10-page story about witchcraft and sorcery by Carl Wessler, "dared enter" the *House Of Mystery* in its 204th issue. What followed was the frequent feature of his works in *HOM* and other *DC's* comic magazine titles such as *House of Secrets, Witching Hour, Unexpected, Weird Mystery, Weird* and *Ghost*. He also did the back-up story in *Rima's* full-length book featuring Jungle Girl.



Early style: simple lines and masses would later metamorphose into beautiful baroque grotesqueries.

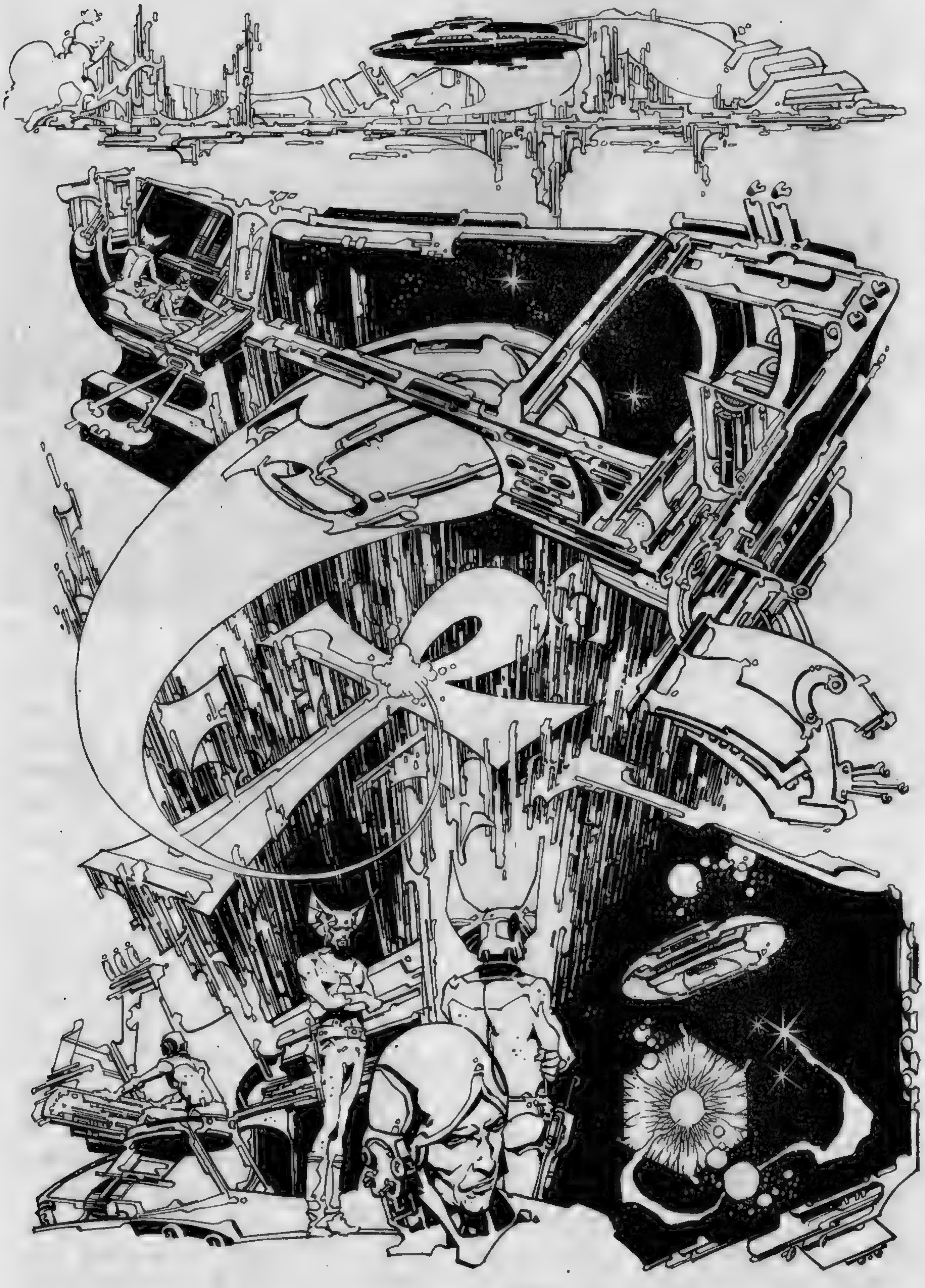
As Niño's interest in local comics waned and his contribution to *DC* stabilized, offers of commissioned works came in from other US publishers who had taken notice of his exceptional — and to some, sensational — talent. Foremost was retired cartoonist Vincent Fago of the *Pendulum Press* whose *Time Machine, Moby Dick* and *Three Musketeers* in illustrated pocketbook editions for children showcased Niño's talent. The books average 60 pages. Of note too was an inking job for Russ Manning illustration of *Tarzan Of The Apes*.

However, Niño's discovery of his artistic self was — as true for many artists in any field — a stubborn, lonely fight all the way. He grew up in a family which held a comics illustrator's profession in low regard. Thus, his meddling with his photographer father's air brush, his copying of illustrations in comic magazines and his crude drawings on walls were dismissed as nothing but childish curiosity rather than tentative gropings of a potential artistic personality. His parents wanted a doctor in the family and that was that. He was sent to Manila to take up Medicine.

As luck would have it, the stay in Manila turned out to be a blessing in disguise. It brought him in touch with various comics publications and, before long, he was apprenticing for Jess Jodloman, the creator of the Viking-type character, *Ramir*.

"I Learned a lot of techniques from *Mang Jess*," Niño said. "Composition, lay-outing, pencilling, inking — the basics. Before I met him at *Bulaklak Publications*, I was at a loss for the right formula to break into comics." One can surmise that Jodloman was also instrumental in his first break into comics in November 1959, when Cristino Mata, the editor of *Bulaklak Magasin*, gave him a four-page script of a story about a *katipunero* hero.

There were other influences during that early stage of searching for a style. Niño studied and borrowed the action and characters from Francisco Coching, the etching techniques from Alfredo Alcala, angling and composition from the action drawings of Ruben Yandoc, and refinement in execution from Nestor Redondo.



An unpublished Niño pen and ink, his entry to the Society of Philippine Illustrations and Cartoonists (SPIC) art exhibit.

Niño has also incorporated some of what he learned from his post-high school exposure to photography in his father's studio in Tarlac. "For two years before I took up medicine, I acted as my father's assistant in covering graduations, weddings, birthdays and the like," he said. Bored as he might be with photography, it has given him valuable pointers in lighting and composition that he soon translated into the illustrated page. Up to now, he employs the air brush to control the application of color in his drawings.

Eclecticism describes Niño's art. Change and growth characterize it, as a survey of his works from 1959 to the present would show. He is an artist forever experimenting with various styles. No matter how original a style used for the work at hand might be, he refuses to sit content but would introduce nuances to the next. The artist evokes the picture of a man playing a game with himself, triumphant with every moment of outdoing himself. The same picture shows, too, an artist refusing to fall into a rut, ever aiming to mature in his relentless search for perfection.

Jodloman, who has seen the transition in Niño's works from 1959 to the mid-60s, notes the latter's lust for experiment. Niño never draws a frame twice but deletes any repetition of either human figure or scene lay-out previously executed. Something new would invariably appear in each of his works. When he saw Alcala's etching of *Voltar* in 1963, he experimented with the eye-straining, technique. He also went into serious cartooning in a style where human and animal forms were distorted and exaggerated for intended effect against a contrastingly realistic background. Turn-

An acute preoccupation with technique...

ing to color illustration, he tried the marking pen but gave up because of the medium's unstableness.

"Although lacking in detail, it had a personality truly his," Jodloman said of Niño's early effort. "After browsing on several references, he would position himself before a drawing board and, with all the ideas lifted from the references, would draw what he had seen but would fashion them the way it suited him." The mentor shed light on the decorative element in Niño's art. "Niño was always in a hurry to ink his pencillings. He filled-in at the inking stage the shadings and decorative details on subjects and backgrounds." The result could be either austere, profusely decorative or something in-between, depending on the artist's mood at the moment.

Niño's extravagance with floral decorations, a baroque style all-too-typically Filipino, has been a source of argument against his art. He has fine brush strokes coupled with accurate inking and excellent composition and shading. Unfortunately, his decorations tend to give his frames a cramped-up finish and obscure his subjects. Notice for instance an episode of *Mga Matang Nagliliyab,* which depicts an old hermit discovering an Eden-like place. The landscape dazzles the reader with all those fantastically executed, superabundant flora and fauna. Without the dialogue balloon, however, the reader would probably have lost sight of the hermit.

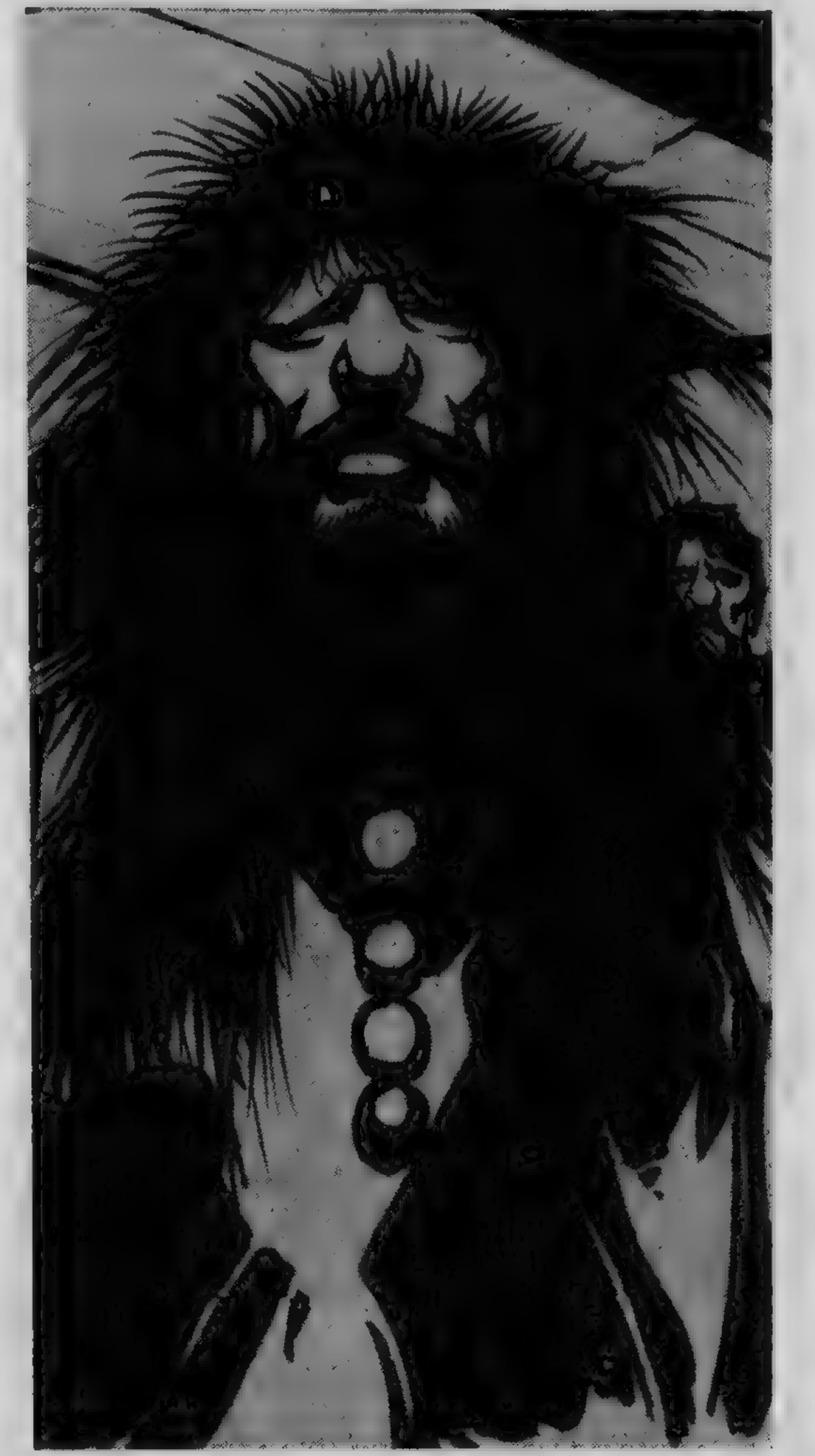
It is perhaps with a renewed awareness that Niño weeded the clutter out of *Ang Lihim Ng Guadalupe* and presented it along impressionistic lines. At this point too, he seems to have gone to the opposite extreme with a high-contrast lighting technique that speaks well of a comparatively spacious presentation. Faces became stark, fine lines and curves while hair and dark areas became solid black splotches. This progressive "clean-up" is apparent in the stylistic evolution of his works in the period from the late 60s to mid-70s. *Maligno,* published in *Redondo Komix* in 1968, is suffused with details unlike *Mariposang Dagat* of 1975 which is allowed to breath, shorn of exquisite but needless decorations.

The engagement with the US comics and the exposure to artists there have pushed Niño to further polish his style and exploit the limits of the high-contrast technique he has adopted. The competitive atmosphere prevalent in the States, the exacting taste of American editors and publishers and the freedom and appreciation given him there may have provided him the incentive to react with renewed, creative vigor. A comparison of his earliest work in the US, *To Die For Magda,* and his latest works in '1984' (June, 1979 issue)reveals an even more acute preoccupation with the technique. Entire frames of *Liaison Aboard A Skylab* are executed in the lightest of outlines like images seen through frosted glass. In contrast, the other frames in the same story carry the more telling elements of the technique's earlier stages evident in *Magda* and *Mariposa.*

Throughout the years of drawing and constant innovations in style, Niño has retained in his works the quality that makes them unique. The same quality gives his works an ironic element in the sense that his characters are closer to fancy than reality. His women and children remind one of kewpie dolls by the way he suggests facial features rather than defines these. His illustrations of horror and science fiction stories reveal an unrelenting flair for the grotesque which is reminiscent of his cartoon period. He delights in drawing ugly creatures probably seen only in nightmares, and emphasizes the unpleasant more by setting these characters against an intentionally beautiful background.

The flair for the 'grotesque' is taking Niño to greater heights. His present work for Warren swamps him with the challenge of conjuring the most unimaginable creatures one may likely experience in an encounter of the third kind. Alien creatures and planets occupy his drawing table. But make no mistake about it. Niño is neither an angry, confused and rebellious man nor a wino in a trance, as his self-appointed critics would put it. It just may be that the expatriate artist is on another stage of artistic growth, a growth which may take him where nobody has ever gone to before. One can, therefore, reasonably expect more surprises from this prolific expatriate.

C. Amigo



THE THOUGHTS OF

INTERVIEW
by
CELESTINO AMIGO

AT THE EARLY AGE OF SEVEN ALEX NIÑO, showed the promise of an extraordinary artistic talent. His photographer father, who painted landscapes in his spare time, would often find his son copying the drawings in comics magazines. The air brush used for retouching photos would mysteriously disappear only to reappear in the hands of the young Alex, spraying figures on a board or a wall. A career in comics illustration, began for him only in 1957, after graduation from high school. However, his parents regarded comics as ' small time' and enrolled him at the Far Eastern University's medical school in 1959. The urge for art was stronger and, before long, Niño started skipping classes to hang around comics publications. By the year's end, he broke into the trade.

But his initial years in comics did not turn out as fortunate as Niño had expected. A series of failures and financial set-backs had left him spiritually battered and continually griping against editors and publishers who failed to comprehend, much less understand, his art. After 10 years in the field and a brief, real break in the early 70's, which saw his art blooming in relative recognition and freedom, Niño disappeared from the local comics scene.

Last April 19, 1979, a three-member team of the *Philippine Comics Review (PCR)* went to San Sebastian Subdivision, Tarlac, Tarlac. To interview Niño.

After the usual preliminaries, the team was led into his surprisingly tidy studio. Leaning against a wall were four paintings depicting a cork-like planet and some other futuristic and unearthly scenes and creatures. Another canvass sat on an easel.

He started the interview with a complaint about a stomach ailment which had been slowing down his already slow work pace. Earlier, he had consulted a doctor who advised him to abstain from liquor. In the afternoon, too, a letter of invitation to the 10th San Diego Comic Convention came from the convention's executive vice-president, Richard W. Butner.

Then, we started shooting questions.

PCR: You've been out of local circulation for four years since 1975. What have you been doing all this time?

NIÑO: I've been concentrating on my work for *Heavy Metal* and *Warren Publishing Co.*, the publisher of '1984' and *Vampirella* comic magazines designed for the adult American market. For them, I do sci-fi short stories and, therefore, I draw alien creatures, spaceships and like stuff. You see, I like to draw ugly creatures. The uglier I make them, the better.

PCR: Do you use models for your alien creatures?

NIÑO: You can see I've a lot of reference books here in the studio; but, unless I'm doing down-to-earth stories, I do not use models and references, only my imagination. My alien creatures are products of my frustrations and my impressions of the people I've had brushes with. Whenever I want to paint alien creatures, all I do is recall their faces. (Laughter). I'm glad foreigners like what I draw and paint.

PCR: What medium do you use best and how fast do you work with them?

NIÑO: I use acrylic with touches of oil. With these, I finish about 15 plates a month, or about half a plate a day.

PCR: What working conditions suit you best?

NIÑO: I can't paint unless everything's in the right place. Before I start work, I see to it that there are no domestic problems, no bill collectors, no nothing to bother me. I need all the peace and quiet to concentrate. That's why I prefer to work at night, usually from 8:00 p.m. to 1:00 a.m., when everything is still. In that condition, my mind can really be productive. I would also often change scripts whenever I get stuck with a particular script due to artist's block.

PCR: You've been to the United States twice. When was the first time?

NIÑO: In 1974. Orvy Jundis, the comics writer, came to the Philippines that year and I met him at *PSG Publications,* where I was working at the time. He invited me to attend the World Science Fiction Convention in Washington, DC, pledging the Philippine Comics Archives of San Francisco to sponsor me — all expenses paid. For three months, I stayed there and enjoyed every minute of it.

PCR: You were the only one chosen, why?

NIÑO: Jundis said I had a distinctive style which was far from the ordinary.

PCR: When did you go back to the States?

NIÑO: In April 1976, and it was no longer for fun but hard work. Ralph Bakshi, a book and comics publisher and artist, sponsored that trip. With Christopher Zavisa and Orvy Jundis as editor and associate editor respectively, we published *Satan's Tears,* a collection of my works in the Philippines and the USA. We printed 1,000 copies which sold for $50 each. This was the time I got commissioned works from *Heavy Metal* and *Warren,* after *DC* and *Marvel.*

PCR: Would you like to immigrate to the US?

NIÑO: No. I like life better in Tarlac.

PCR: Did you meet anybody in the States who left you a lasting impression?

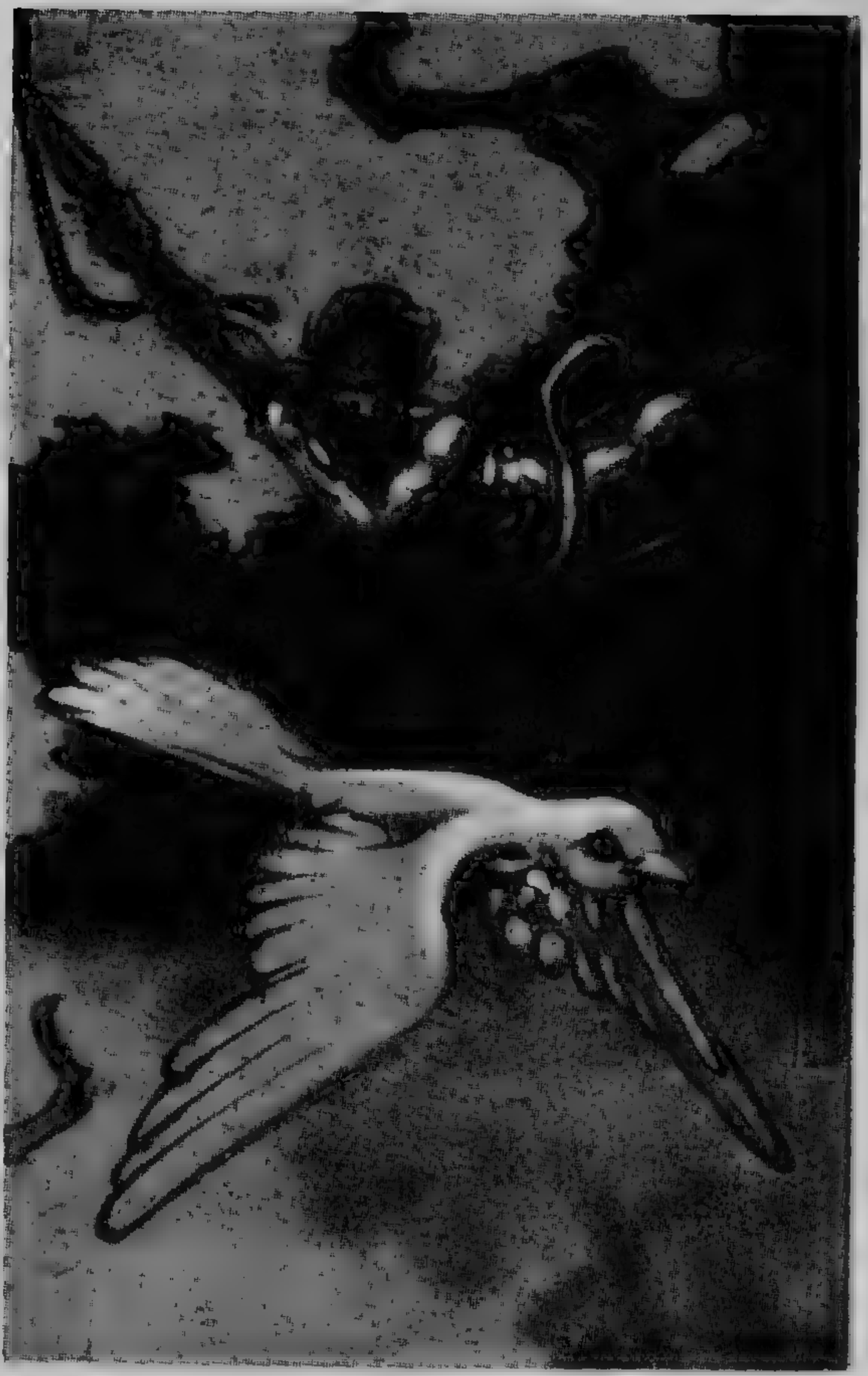
NIÑO: Yes, Steve Leialoha, a comics illustrator who kept hounding me during the convention. He was my fan and he wanted so much to imitate my style that he wouldn't leave me alone.

PCR: What's your impression of American comics artists compared to ours?

NIÑO: I don't think Filipinos are any far behind in craftsmanship. In fact, we are quite advanced and way above their expectations.

PCR: Has any foreign illustrator influenced your style?

NIÑO: No one I'm aware of; although lately I've been picking up a few good points from some, like Moebius.



Yes, art is what you feel
Your senses — only they make
you a slave,
To abandon your life which gave
you a price —
Your pride, a part of your soul.
—ALEX NIÑO

PCR: Can you tell us the people who have greatly helped you in your career?

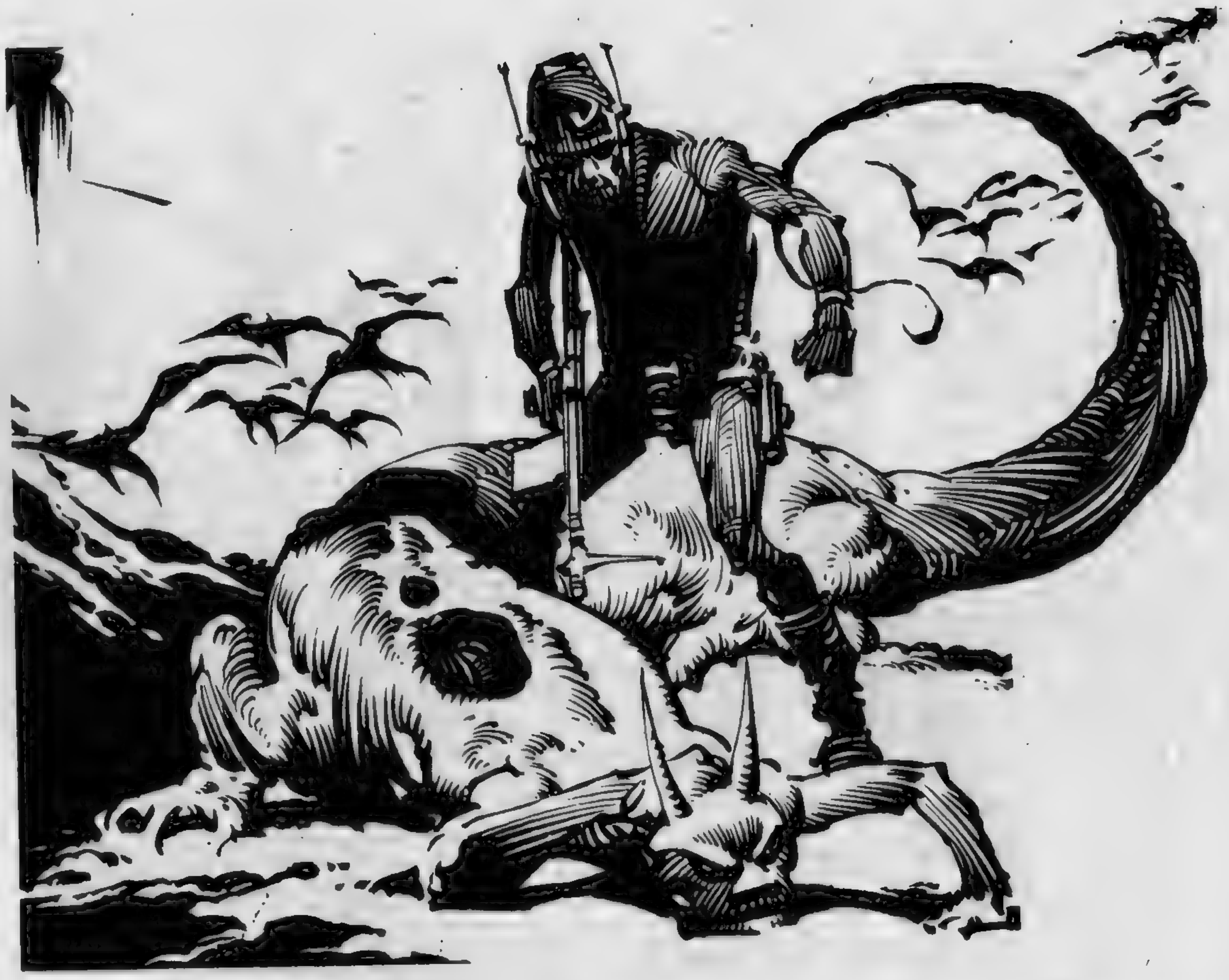
NIÑO: First of all is Jess Jodloman to whom I served as apprentice. He's a very gentle guy. I've never seen him raise his voice, curse or get mad. From him I learned patience. Then, there's Cristino Mata, the *Bulaklak Magasin* editor who in 1959 gave me my first break also. There's Pablo S. Gomez who saved me from a very difficult moment in the late 60s. And of course Nestor Redondo who gave me all those pointers in refining my drawings.

PCR: In your opinion, when did the local comics really bloom?

NIÑO: The Golden Age of Philippine Comics, if we can call it that, came during the time of Coching and the *Ace Publications.* Coching and his contemporaries set standards which have yet to be surpassed, or even equalled, by their successors. The present crop of artists, though, are improving.

PCR: Any advise to them?

NIÑO: They must be consistent. They must pour all they've got into their works. Whenever they get hold of a script, they must dig into it as if it were their first work or their masterpiece. If they've done something good, the next one should be even better.



PCR: Since you've been absent from the local scene, have you any plans for a comeback, granting you are paid your present U.S. rate?

NIÑO: A comeback at the moment's quite remote, considering that I'm up to here with my workload. I'm having problems just meeting the deadlines. You see, I'm doing 15 plates for the *Land of Enchantment* for my second portfolio, which is going to be published shortly.

PCR: What are your other projects?

NIÑO: I want to have two more books published. They're not going to be the fanzine types, but my own version of the *Lord of the Rings* by Tolkien, and my own version of the Bible with a sci-fi approach. Also, *Ballantine Books* wants to publish a collection of my art works in book form. I d like to settle the terms first before starting the project. I'll take a breather once I finish these.

Niño (2nd fr.L.) with PCR team.

PCR. It looks like a long way to go, but when do you think would be the right time for you to retire?

NIÑO: When all my children have graduated from college which I think would be about 15 years from now.

PCR: Would you let them follow your footsteps?

NIÑO: I would not advice it. No. But neither would I stand in the way of their wishes.

PCR: As of now, can you say you've found fulfillment in your art?

NIÑO: Happiness and fulfillment hasn't come to me in as complete a way as I've imagined. I feel I have not yet contributed anything of value to art, whether it be in comics or in my paintings. I m still groping for something which will be my lasting contribution to art.

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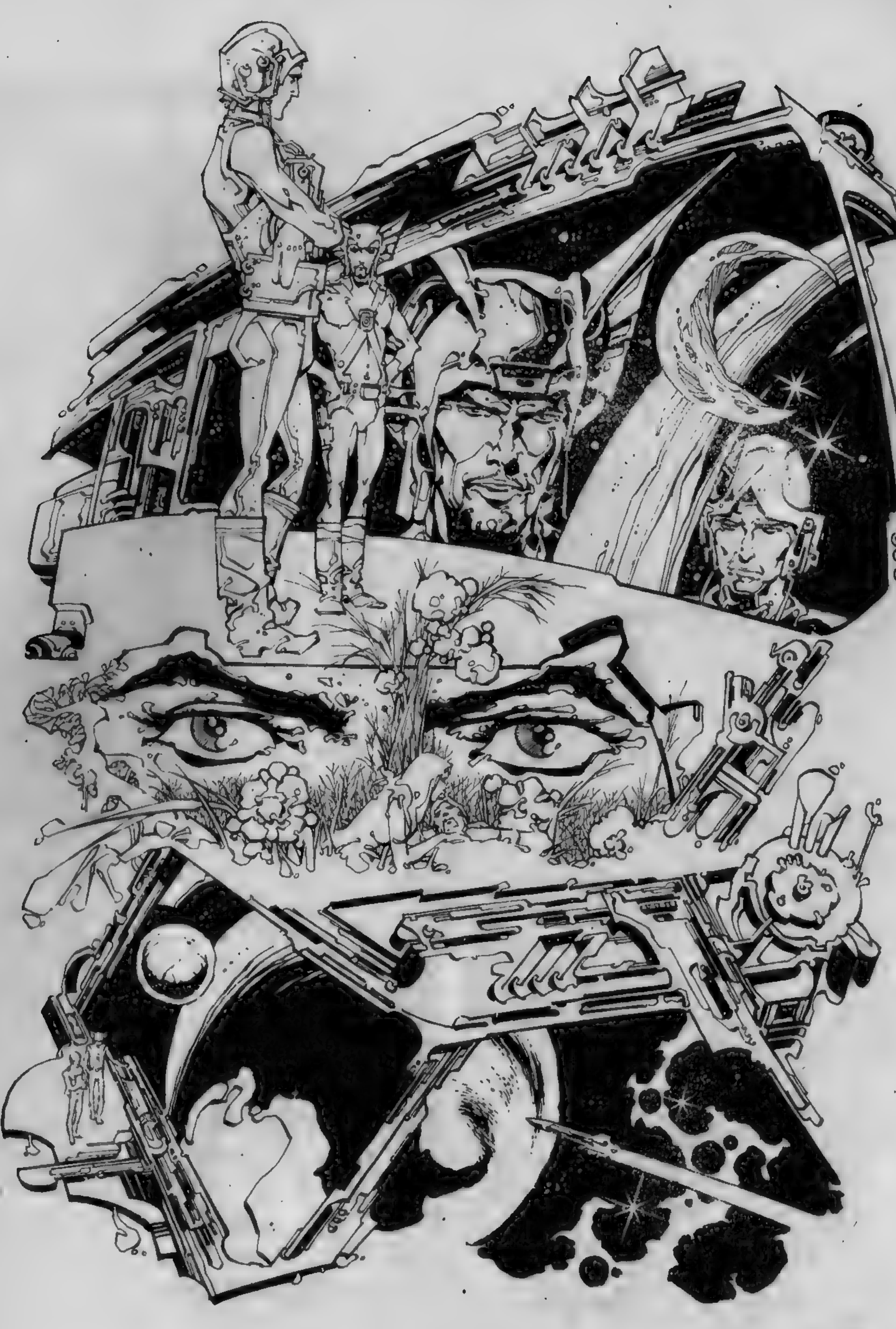
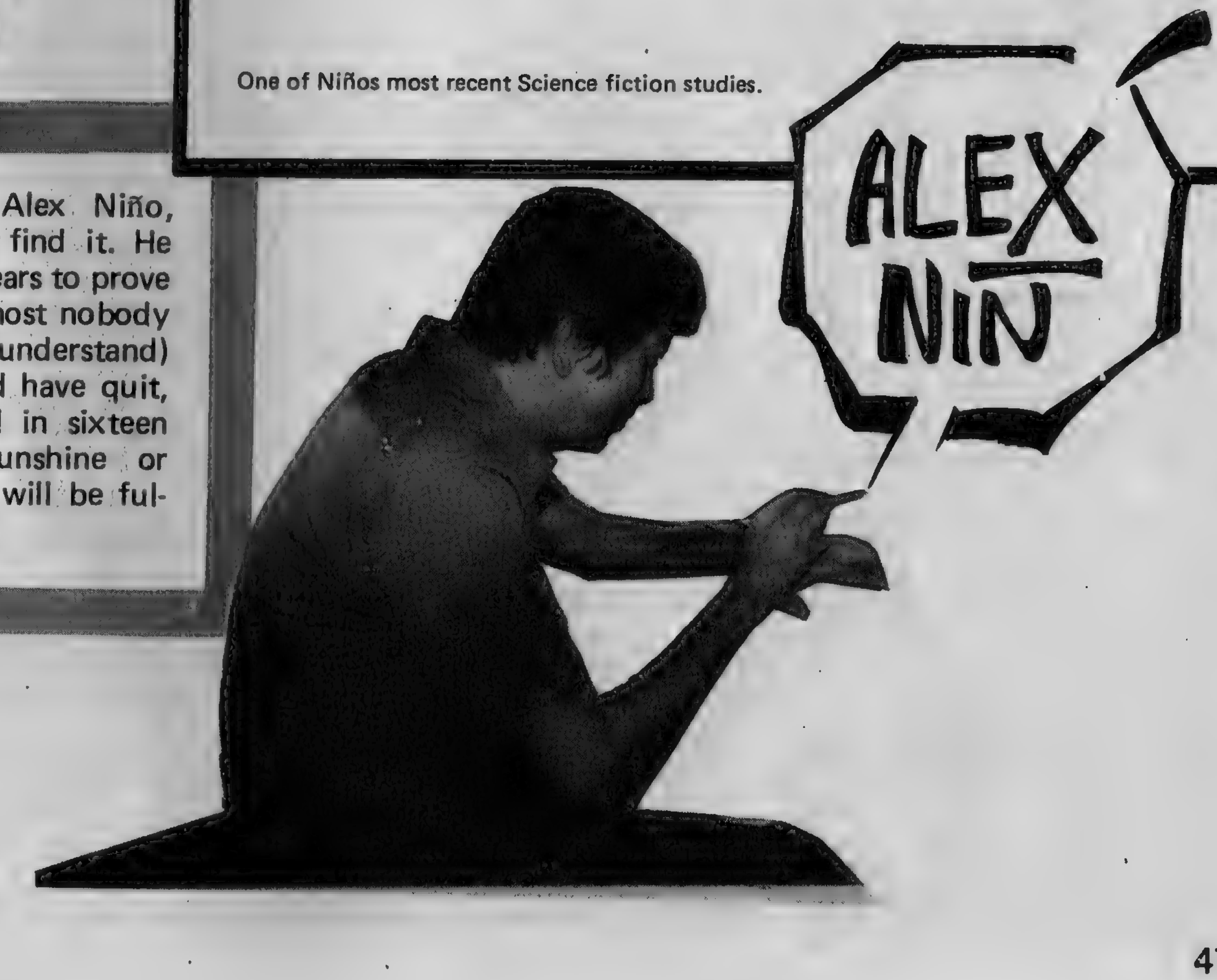
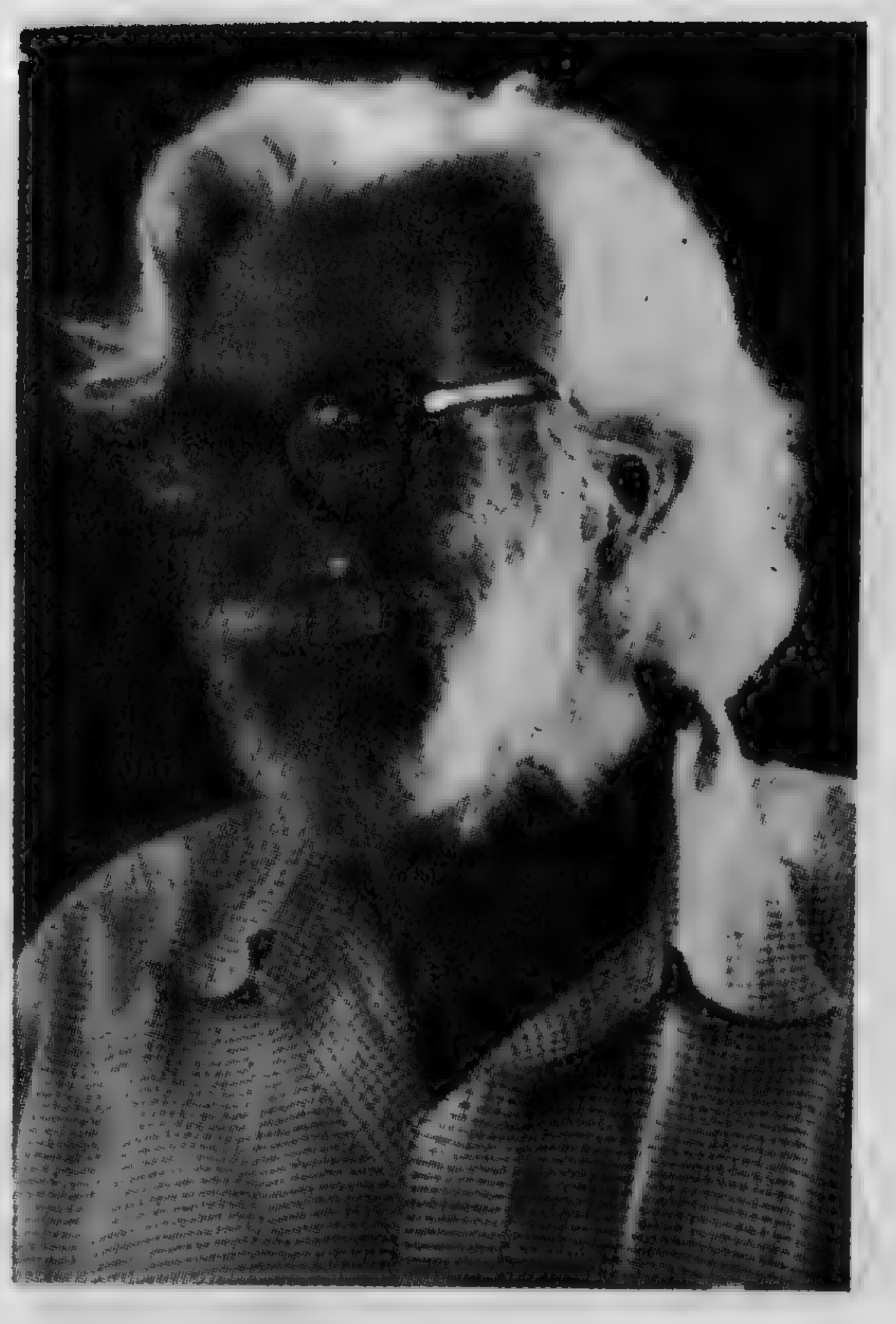


One of Niños most recent Science fiction studies.

Whatever is missing, Alex Niño, true artist, will surely find it. He has endured 16 hard years to prove that his art (which almost nobody in the local scene could understand) is a valid art. He could have quit, but, he kept on. And in sixteen years more, come sunshine or stormy weather, Niño will be fulfilled. We are sure of it.





VINCE FAGO AT THE PLAZA

by Ros H. Matienzo

Impressions about a visiting artist who's also an editor, and a literary producer.

The Philippine Plaza loomed with the color of dark gold that afternoon we decided to call on *Vince Fago.* It was hot, too. And we dreaded going there, seeing as how it was going to be a sweaty affair for everyone. But the appointment had been set and go we did.

PIT CAPILI, staff photog who took the lovely pictures you see on this spread, was characteristically late in arriving at our meeting place. So we went ahead, located Fago's room and knocked.

The door was opened by, of all people, Vic Catan. We don't know why, and we didn't ask, but the air conditioning of the room had been shut off. The ventilation appeared to be coming from the open windows only which admitted nothing but hot air from the outside.

Vince Fago, we could see, was at the 'back' of the room. Vic Catan, smiling like the Cheshire cat, moved back so we could step inside. The American was supervising the work of a couple of artists who were busy with the finishing touches on full-size comic book pages.

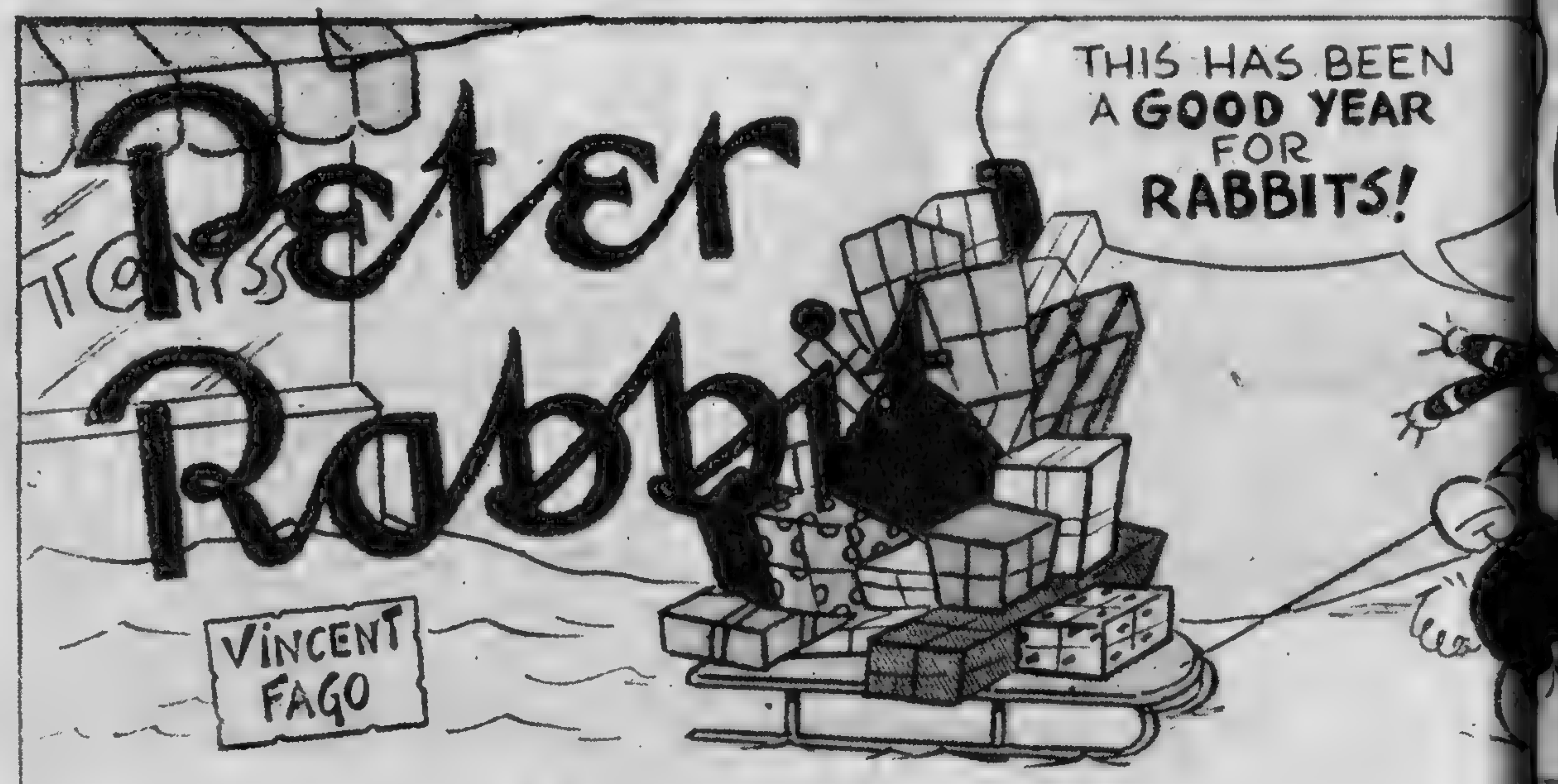
Fago came forward, extended his hand which we took and told us pleased to meet you and welcome. And right away we knew that we were going to have trouble with the interview. Because there appeared to be something wrong with his nose: It sounded clogged. However, that nose, which could have been described as 'patrician' (if it weren't too large), was glowing a cheery fire engine red, his firm grip was friendly, and, though his olfactory organ was often the cynosure of our attention, we soon got used to it and we had the feeling that it would be a fine day after all.

Fago's other facial adornments were both natural and artificial. The artificial one was the pair of eyeglasses which set off to advantage a set of eyes that can only be described as 'beautiful'. The natural one was the beard, which was startling white, as his heavy head of hair. The white beard surrounded a mouth that was both sensual and bitter, which, however, was set in what appears to be a permanent smile. As Americans go, Fago was not so tall. He had the height of a Filipino. A Filipino who had stopped growing at fifteen.

His countenance was — there's only one way to describe it — saintly. And we were to learn later than his appearance matched his soul. We remember thinking at that time, that Saint Joseph must have looked like Fago looked then With the slight indulgent smile and that voice (which resembled a *basso profundo* and which would have sounded just great, but for the sinuses), coupled with the beard, the gentle movements of the hands, was probably just how some Biblical saint would disport himself.

Fago introduced us then to Mrs. Fago, an attractive, big-boned woman who spoked in measured tones. Later, his daughter, a son and an acquaintance of his son would come in, with a companion. But that was two hours away. That was when we would

Three panels of a Sunday installment of *Peter Rabbit,* Fago's most famous creatio


Peter Rabbit
TOYS
THIS HAS BEEN A GOOD YEAR FOR RABBITS!
VINCENT FAGO

decide to go. But before all that, we had 2 full hours of Vincent Fago's delightful company. Mid-way, Pit Capili, lugging cameras and other paraphernalia came in, sweaty, fat and apologetic and talking (even to us!) in 'English'.

Looking at Fago, one finds it hard to believe that such a serene-visaged man could author *Peter Rabbit,* a hit serial in the U.S. Or that he was Editor at *Marvel* for a while. But he was. Much later, as he matured in the business, he found his "true calling" as a figure actively involved in books for children. This was after a stint with *Golden Press* churning out learning books.

The children's books period came soon after, in cooperation with *Pendulum Press.* He is still actively involved with them. And the main reason why he was in the Philippines, that hot summer day not too long ago.

In 1972, while leafing through a *DC* comic book, he came across the illustration of an artist which "was just impressive". It was a work of Nestor Redondo. And he resolved to meet the artist. He did this by asking around. He finally traced Redondo to the Philippines, which he visited a short time later. And shortly thereafter a work agreement was forged between Fago and the *Redondo Studios*. Many of Fago's books are now being illustrated by Filipino artists.

A second generation Italian, Fago can sympathize with Filipinos who find the going hard in the U.S. For they were the victims of discrimination, too, at one time, Italians being called by the disparaging name of *"dagos".*

But all that is in the past. Fago is a contented man, who derives much satisfaction in what he does. "I feel respected in the work I do," he said "I have great pride as an artist and I take pride in dealing with artists who have integrity. I'm proud of them and the work they do for me, because they help children, who will be tomorrow's citizens, through the books that we make . . ."

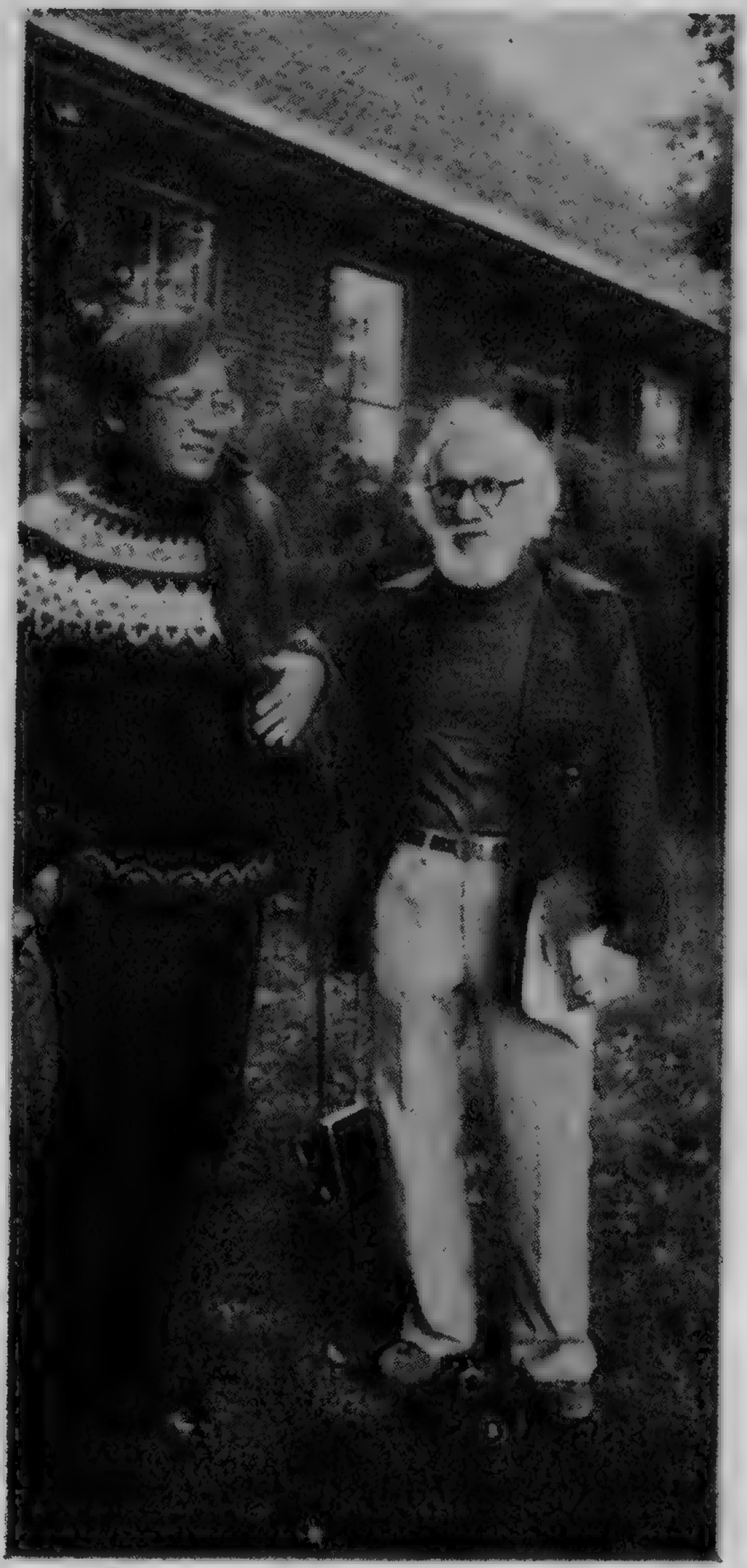
He would have gone on to Japan, to seek out artists there, but changed his mind. "Japanese work is bad," he said. "They cannot begin to compare with the work being done here, in your country . . ." He avers that *Warren Publishing* does the "best art work" in the U.S. at this time. But he does not go for too much violence and sex.

Pit Capili, who was busy clicking away with his cameras, suddenly blurted out that he was out of film. And as if on cue, the daughter, the son and the acquaintance of Vince Fago came in. we said a hasty goodbye and left.

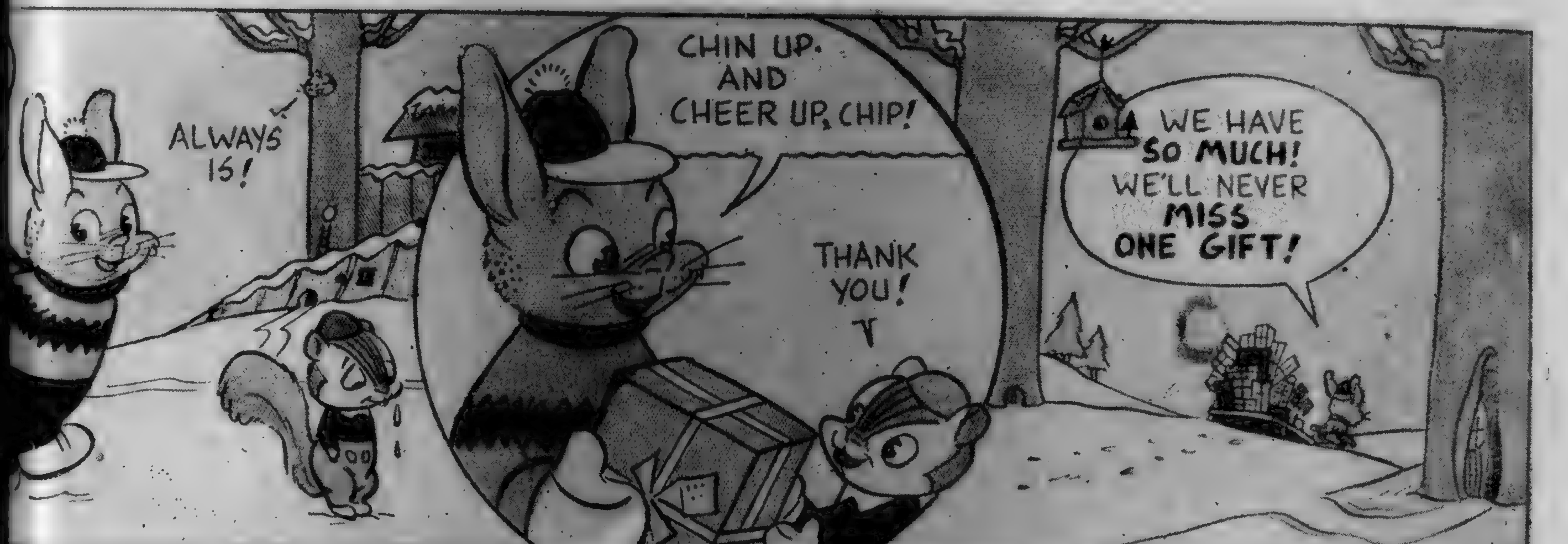
The afternoon had not been as fruitful as we had hoped it would be. For one thing we were not able to ask about Fago's working methods, his suggestions (if he has any) about how local artists can improve their craft.

But Fago will return, he assured us before we left.

We will ask him then.



Nestor Redondo (l) and Fago on the lawn of the Maxfield Parrish Museum.


ALWAYS IS!
CHIN UP AND CHEER UP, CHIP!
THANK YOU!
WE HAVE SO MUCH! WE'LL NEVER MISS ONE GIFT!

RIZAL Inventor OF THE COMICS

by Dando Redondo

One afternoon in 1886, in the art capital of the world, Paris, France, *JOSE P. RIZAL,* who would one day be the National Hero of the Philippines, called on award-winning painter-friend *JUAN LUNA,* who was managing an *atelier* at 65 Boulevard Arago. Luna, who had bested the most famous European artists of the time in a contest (with his masterpiece *'Spoliarium'*), frequently entertained Rizal.

While they talked of such unrelated topics as the Spanish oppression of the Philippines, his opthalmology studies at the Universities of Leipzig and Heidelberg, and the birth of the modern art movement in France, Rizal picked up a diary album of the Luna family and briefly sketched something on the pages.

That artistic exercise, unbeknownst to Luna, and Rizal himself, was actually a historic event of great magnitude. For, surprisingly, Rizal drew what probably is the first comics strip, in the pages of that album.

Indeed, unknown to many Filipinos, including *Rizalistas* themselves, Rizal was the first comics artist locally and possibly the world. However, with deeper study and research, we are inclined to conclude that Rizal, who was a genius in every sense of the word and one who had always walked ahead of his contemporaries, was actually the inventor of the comics strip, for he made his strip, earlier than the "first" published ones. His invention was not credited to him since his sketches were meant only as a token of remembrance to the Luna family and were never meant for publication purposes. Perhaps the historians were not even aware of this feat. It may also be that being of Asiatic descent, he was discriminated against by white European contemporaries, so that there was no emphasis on his status as an inventor.

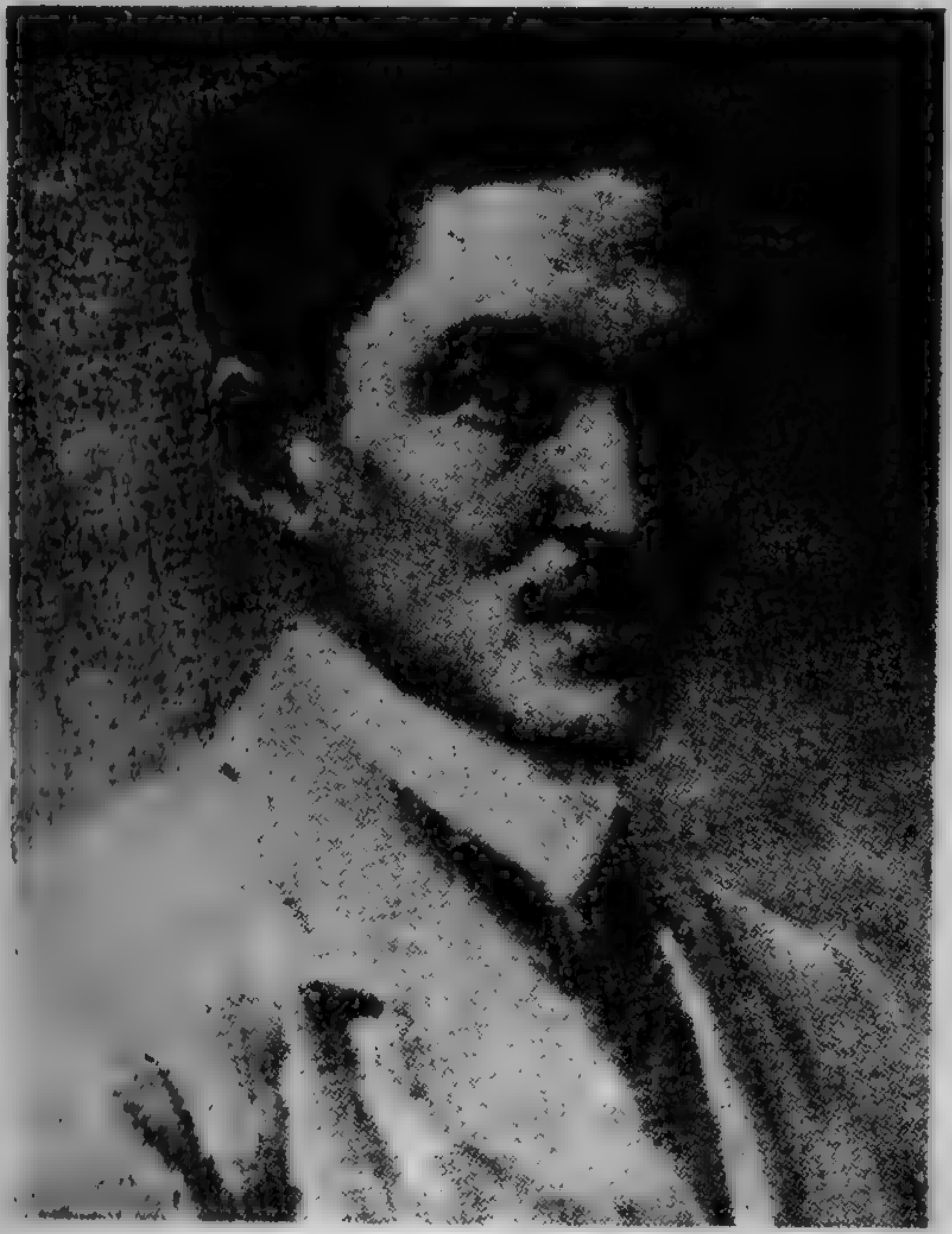
Since Luna's *atelier* in the French capital had been the meeting place of many 19th century European artists (Luna even tutored some of them, including Frenchmen), it is now believed that these might have gotten hold of the album, saw Rizal's sketches and then copied the idea.

Is it so absurd to suppose that the French can be capable of copying from a Filipino? A closer scrutiny will disclose that this is not as absurd as it sounds. Compared to French artists at that time whose talents were limited to painting, Rizal was a *total man.* He was a surgeon, a teacher, an opthalmologist, a journalist, an author (whose novels changed and sealed the fate of the Spaniards in the Philippines), a philosopher, a poet, a painter, a draftsman, a sculptor and an engraver, a composer, a musician, (who played the violin and the flute) a linguist, a surveyor a freedom-fighter, etc. etc. Rizal, in short, was the compleat Renaissance Man. He was in every important field of endeavor. With his multifarious talent could he not have invented something as simple as a comic strip? The evidence discloses that he could and did.

In the book *"A History of the Comics Strip"* by Pierre Couperie, and Maurice C. Horn *et al,* is mentioned that as early as the 1880's French magazines and books had been invaded by the "silent picture story" (with the coming of age of engraving and lithography) called "image d'epinal."

Nadar and Caran d' Ache were mentioned as the exponents of the new fad. Significant too is the fact that Rodolphe Topffer and Wilhelm Busch (both Swiss), contributed their art to French magazines. Topffer, — Genevan professor, is remembered for his *'Vieuxbois', 'Mr. Cryptogame'* and *'Mr. Jabot'.* All of their works were made in 1846 and 1847. But these are not considered "comics" (in the sense that the word is understood today) because these were nothing more nor less than single illustrations provided with text below the pictures, akin to newspaper editorial cartoons in appearance. The 'elements' of comics as we know it, are lacking.

Christophe (the pen name of Georges Colomb), a French artist and a student of the *Ecole Normale,* is said to have introduced in France the "first" comics with all its elements. Inspired by Professor Topffer, he published in 1889 *'La Famille Fernouillard a' L'Exposition'* (The Fernouillard Family Goes to the Fair).



Juan Luna's portrait of Rizal done in Paris in 1886, the year the hero invented the comics.

'Fernouillard' had all the elements of comics. As Couperie *et al* put it, they are: "Narrative by sequence of pictures, continuing characters from one sequence to the next, and inclusion of dialogues within the pictures."

If the Frenchmen Couperie *et al* are to be believed, Christophe should get the credit for 'fathering' the comics strip. And the rest (Topffer, Nadar, Caran d' Ache) would be the originators of the silent picture story. Christophe, by the way, is known in the U.S. for his influence on Rudolph Dirks, the first American Comics strip Cartoonist, famous for his *'The Katzenjammer Kids'.* Dirks brainchild appeared in a William Randolph Hearst newspaper. After Dirks, comics began to flood America. In 1896, Richard Outcault came out with the titles *'World'* and *'Down Hogan's Alley'.* Then in 1897 James Simmerton published *'The Little Tiger'* and *'Little Jimmy'.* By 1899, Fredrick Burr Opper had his *'Happy Hooligan'.*

England had her version of the silent picture stories, too. W.F. Thomas' *'Ne're-do-Well Ally Sloper,'* a single-frame cartoon was England's favorite for 36 years (1884-1920).

Their first comics published in 1896 was Tom Browns' *'Weary Willie and Tired Tim'* which appeared in *Illustrated Chips,* a magazine for children.

When the Philippines was subjected to the American yoke (1899-1946) after the conclusion of the Treaty of Paris wherein defeated Spain (defeated by the Filipinos and Americans) sold its former colony to the U.S., the new set of white masters introduced "new" inventions and innovations in the Islands including the English language and, of all ironies, comics.

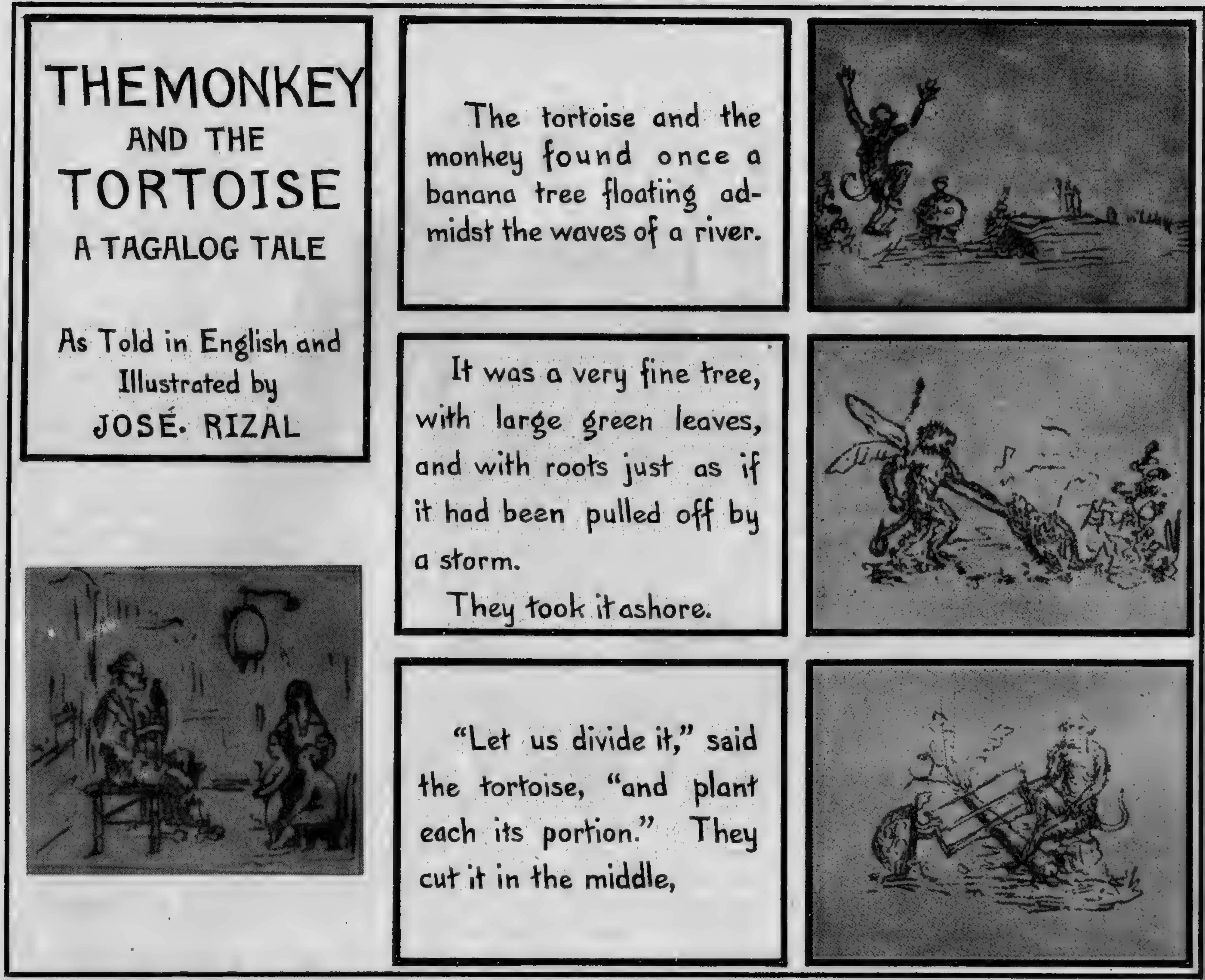
Thus the comics was introduced to the Filipinos by the Americans, who picked it up from the French, who in turn might have gotten the idea from Rizal, A Filipino who frequently stayed in Paris.

Christophe, the French artist who is credited with introducing the comics in France, came out with his *'Fernouillard'* only in 1889 as the Couperie book mentions. Rizal did his sketches in Luna's album in 1886 or three full years before the publication of Christophe's work.

Are the elements of comics present in Rizal's sketches? These definitely are.

In 1889, or at about the time that Christophe's comics were being published in French periodicals, Rizal's sketches were also appearing in Truebner's *Record of London.* European ethnologists were attracted to the work of this Asiatic from an anonymous Spanish colony. In fact it is said that a certain Dr. H. Kern, a Dutch/Malay authority was so impressed with Rizal's 1886 work that he made it the subject of his paper, delivered before the International Congress of Orientalists in Stockholm, Sweden, in the same year, and published a monograph about it, with additional notes, in Leyden in 1889.

Rizal's first comics strip was a fable with menagric figures as main characters and it was written, unexpectedly, in English, a language unfamiliar to the Filipinos, the *lingua franca* in vogue at that time, locally, being Spanish (can this be an example of Rizal's prescience, that Filipinos of



THE MONKEY AND THE TORTOISE
A TAGALOG TALE

As Told in English and
Illustrated by
JOSÉ RIZAL

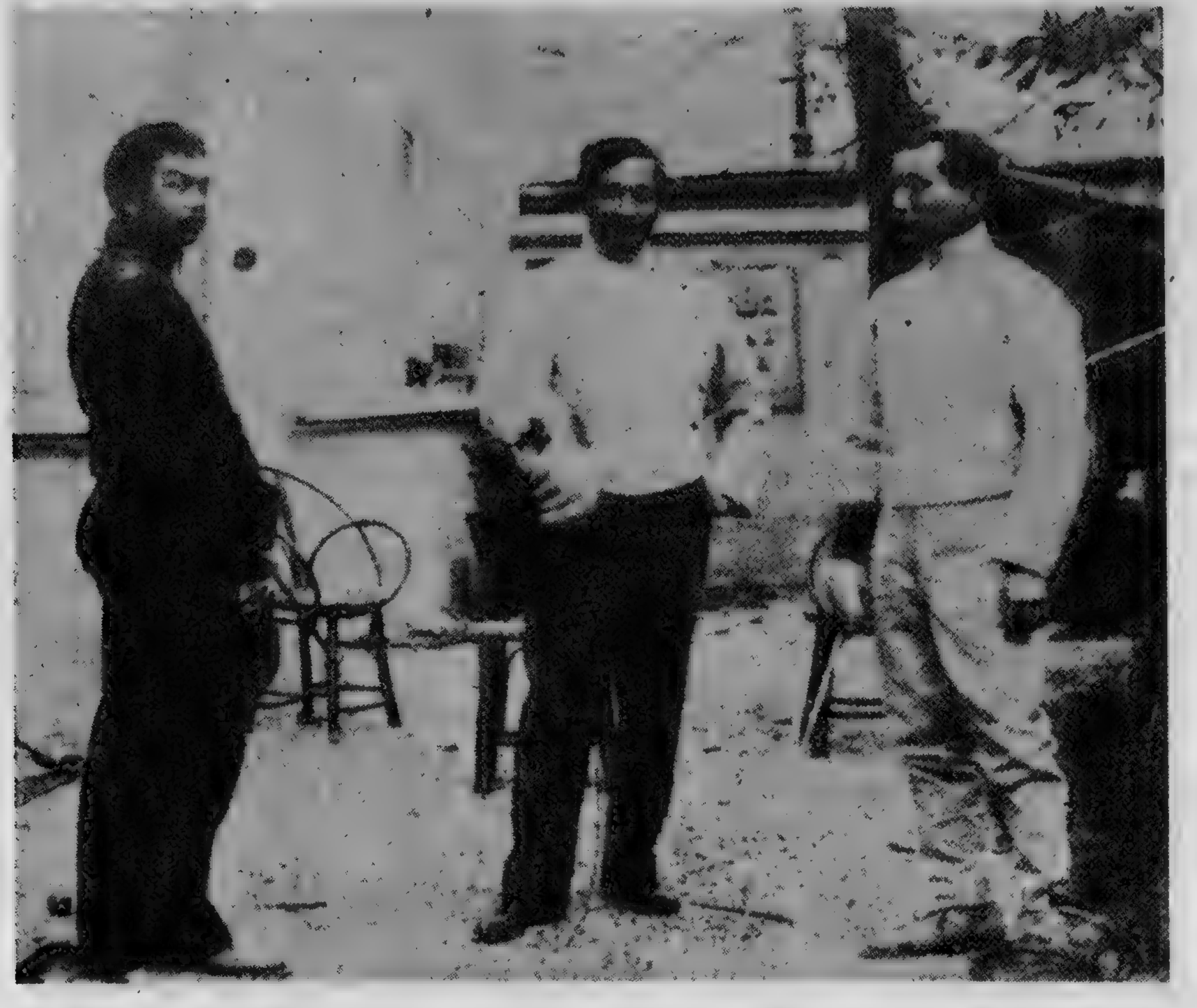
The tortoise and the monkey found once a banana tree floating admidst the waves of a river.

It was a very fine tree, with large green leaves, and with roots just as if it had been pulled off by a storm.

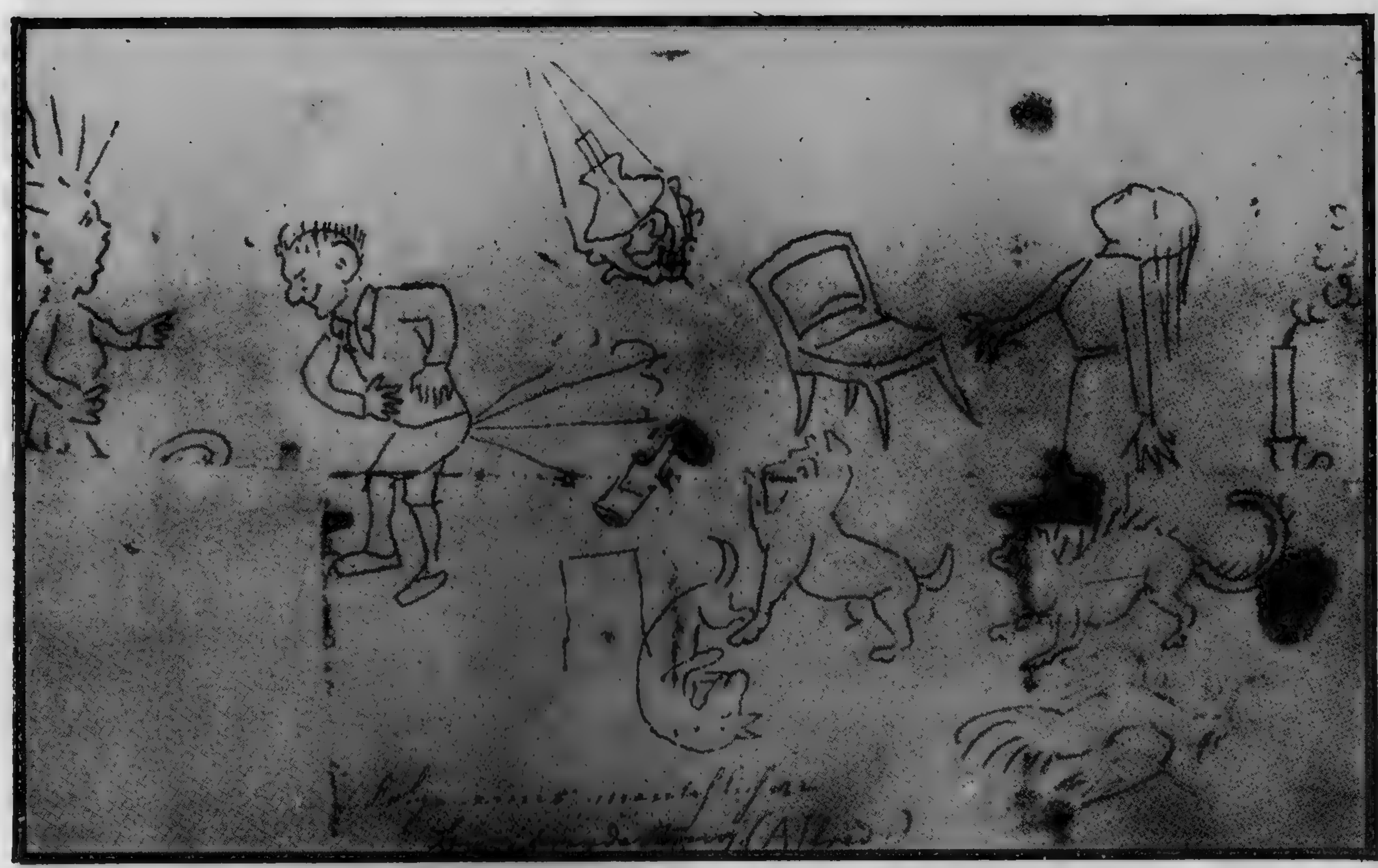
They took it ashore.

"Let us divide it," said the tortoise, "and plant each its portion." They cut it in the middle,

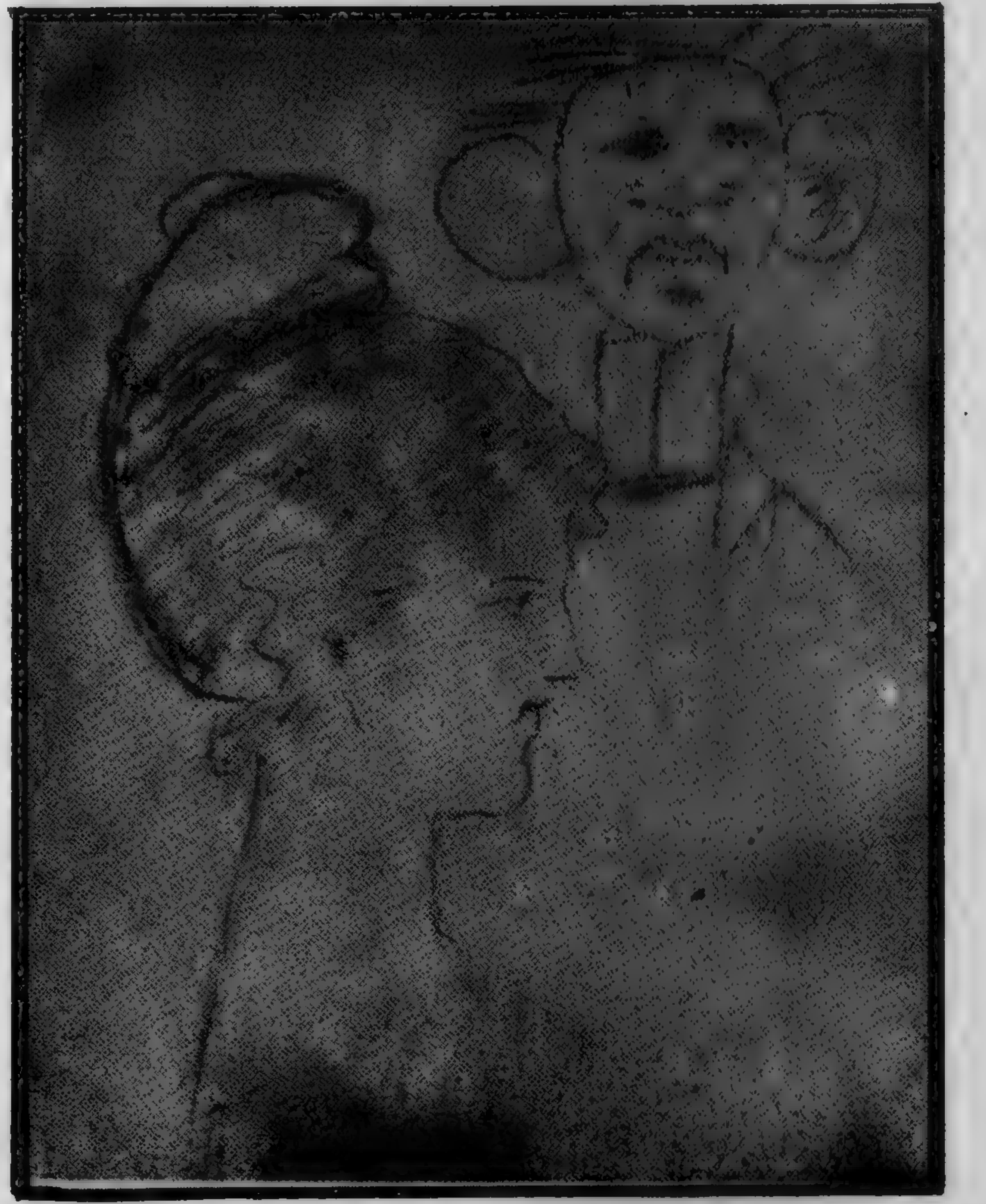
Some panels of Rizal's comics as published in *Truebner's Record.*

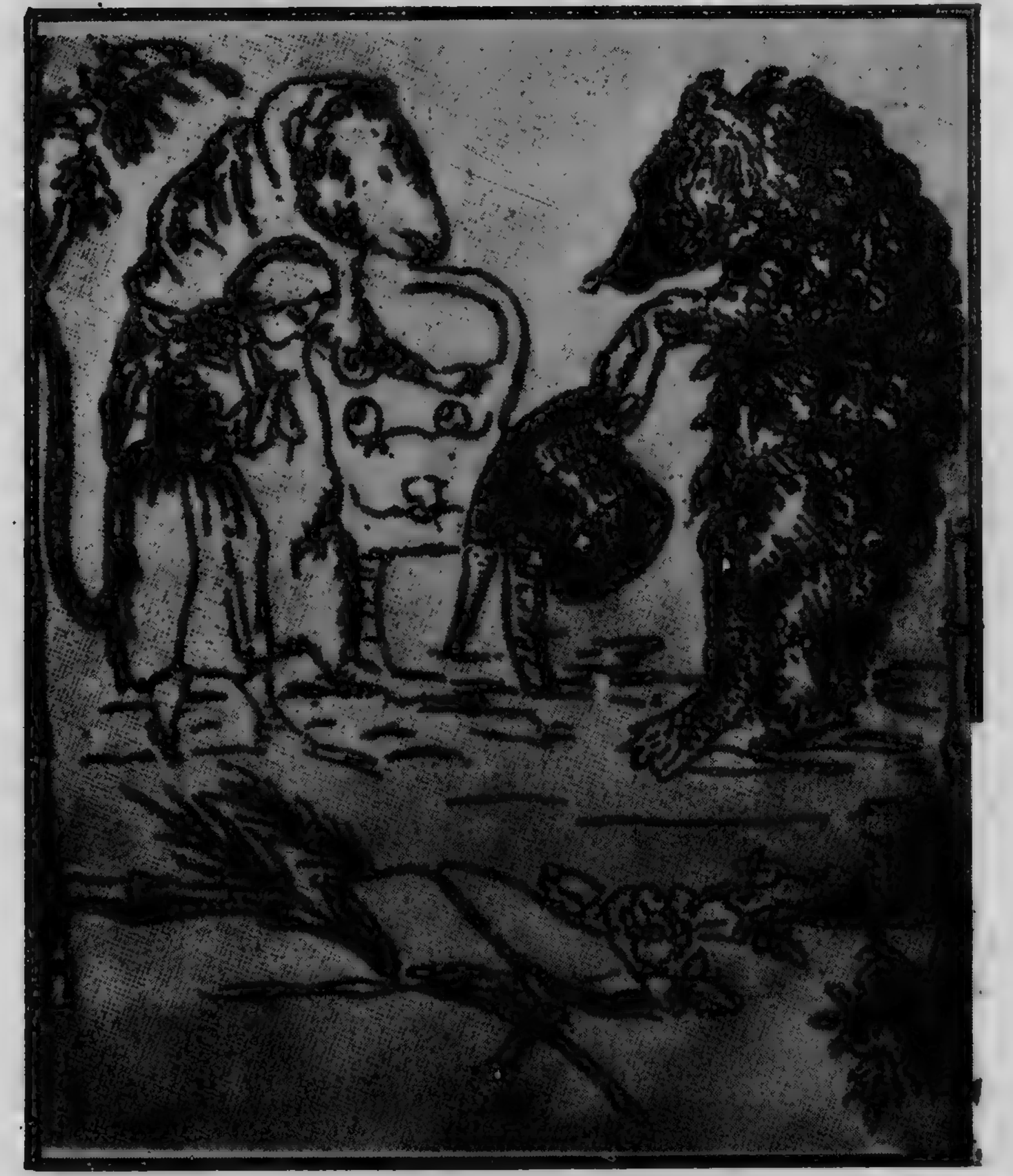


Rizal (C), friend Juan Luna (L) and Valentin Ventura (R) during break in fencing session. Rizal and Luna were both master swordsmen.



A humorous sketch betrays Rizal's funny bone and flair for cartooning, qualities of a good comics artist.





Rizal's caricature of an *indio* and a creole (above L): probably a wry graphic comment on his own relationship with Josephine Bracken. (R) One of the many panels for Andersen's fairy tales done by Rizal.

the 20th century would be speaking the Anglo-Saxon tongue?).

Reproduced in this issue (see box) is part of Rizal's 34-frame folklore, *'The Monkey and the Turtle'*, a Tagalog fable. We are sure you will agree with us that it is "comics" as all of us understand it.

Thus, to Jose P. Rizal's many distinctions may be added one more: that of being the 'Inventor of the Comics.'

"DO THEY KNOW HOW I TRY, HOW I AGONIZE, I SUFFER ?"

(For more than two months, Editor Ros H. Matienzo had been after Carlo J. Caparas. Caparas, you see, has proven to be an 'original': he is the most prolific writer in Philippine comics, barring none. His views regarding his work and other authors are startling and should be heard. The Editor felt, as a result, that Caparas ought to be in the first issue. But tracking the man down proved frustrating, for he could be as elusive as a shadow. After fruitless days of searching, Matienzo learned that Caparas goes to see Steve Gan, an artist, once in a while, so that they could both go together to watch boxing bouts at the Rizal Memorial Coliseum. Matienzo then asked Gan to set up a rap session between him and the controversial writer. On the appointed day, Matienzo, with staff photographer Pit Capili in tow, arrived at the Gan residence in San Juan, Metro Manila. Caparas and Gan arrived an hour later. Matienzo learned that Gan had to coax the author to consent to the interview, had even fetched him from his residence. And so the longed-for interview finally took place. Talking in Pilipino, Caparas revealed his thoughts on his work, other writers, and related matters. Excerpts:)

MATIENZO: When did you start writing for the comics?

CAPARAS: In 1969. Much later, Pablo Gomez of *PSG Publications* made me an editor. I was also the layout artist then. I was paid ₱6.00 a day and I was given a per-page rate of ₱3.50 for every short story I wrote. I was limited to one short story per issue.

MATIENZO: Why did you go into comics?

CAPARAS: *DahilL gutom ako.**

MATIENZO: Do you remember the title of the first story you ever wrote? What is your most memorable, so far?

CAPARAS: The first story was called *"Citadel,"* which I wrote in 1971. *"Kiss My Feet"* subtitled *"Hagkan Mo Ang Aking Mga Paa,"* is the memorable one.

MATIENZO: How many novels have you written to date?

CAPARAS: About 200 novels. *"Juan Tornado,"* which is still running, has had 203 installments published to date. (note: May 1979) it is proving to be the most popular novel I have ever written so far.

MATIENZO: I understand that you wrote an all-time high of 36 novels in installments, at one given time. How many novels of yours are being serialized at the moment?

CAPARAS: 32 of my novels are running simultaneously right now. I have slowed down somewhat (laughs).

MATIENZO: Who do you consider your most important rival in the business?

CAPARAS: What do you mean?

MATIENZO: Among the competition, who comes closest to being as prolific as you?

CAPARAS: Only Mars Ravelo. But then, there is really no comparison. Because I'm ahead of him by a mile.

MATIENZO: How do you work out your novels? How do you construct the plots?

CAPARAS: Oh, I don't know. They just come naturally. When they do, and they can come in the middle of the night, I write these down, not resting until I'm through writing what needs to be written down.

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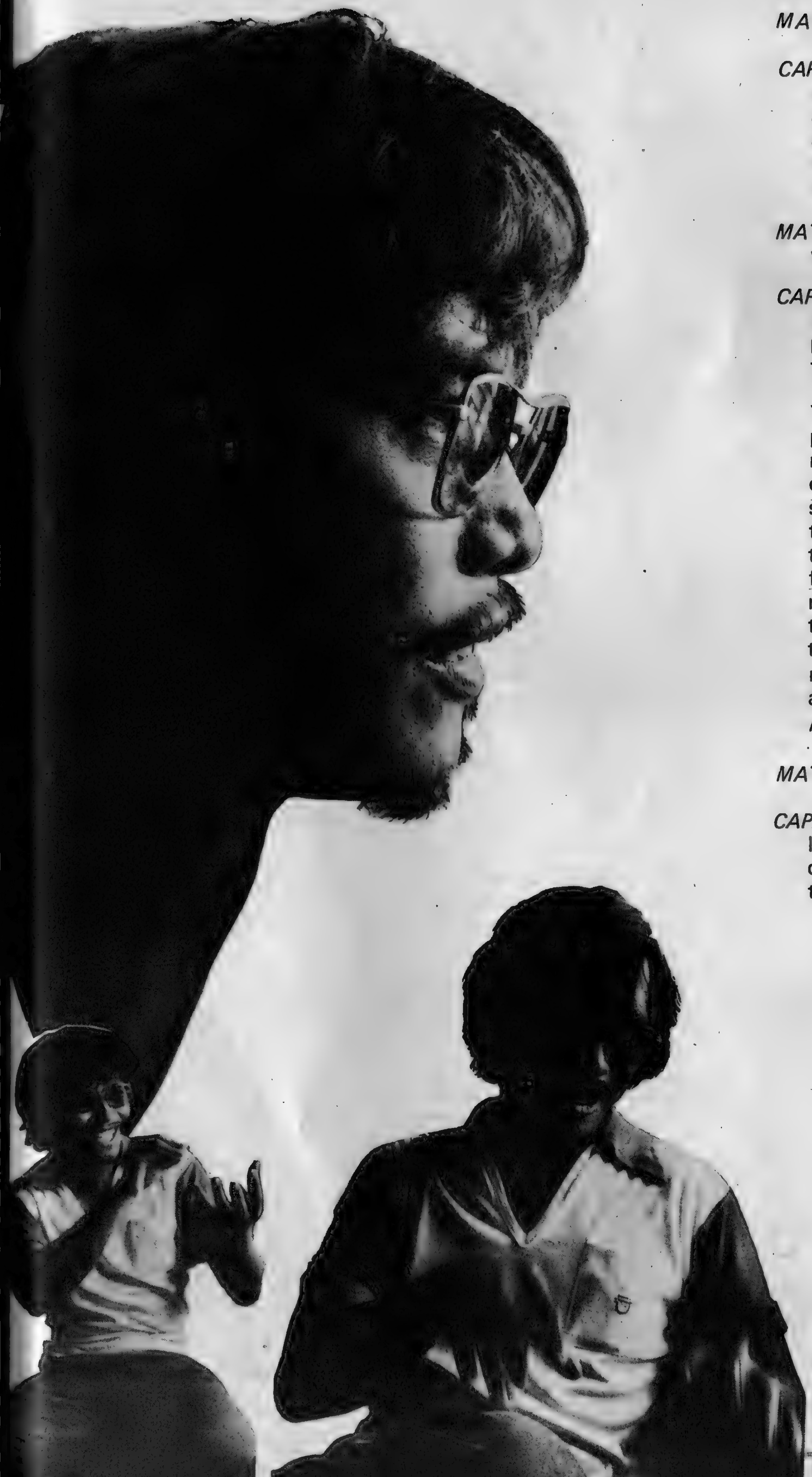
*Because I was hungry.



MATIENZO: Any favorite authors?

CAPARAS: Francisco V. Coching is my favorite among the local authors. And Harold Robbins and James Clavell among the foreign ones. I have just finished reading Clavell's "SHOGUN".

MATIENZO: How many novels of yours have been filmed?

CAPARAS: About ten. Thirty have actually been bought and paid for, but production on them have not begun.

You know, I am leery of some producers who ask me to submit synopses of my novels. Most of these people return the stories to me, after reading them. Later I would discover that they have lifted excerpts from my work, or have plagiarized them entirely, have given them new titles and have filmed them, without compensating me in any way. For instance, a portion of the novel *"Bakekang,"* was plagiarized.

MATIENZO: Who are these people?

CAPARAS: One of them is a popular superstar who is also a producer. I do not care to identify the others.

MATIENZO: How much are you paid per novel? For film purposes, I mean?

CAPARAS: It varies. *I was paid ₱10,000.00 for "Totoy Bato"* and I got *₱20,000.00 for "Ang Huling Lalaki Ng Baluarte."*

MATIENZO: Let's talk of people who illustrate your stories. Who among these are your favorites?

CAPARAS: For illustrating my action novels, I would say that Steve Gan, Ading Gonzales and Nestor Malgapo are the best in the business. For dramatic novels, Mar Santana, Rico Rival and Abe Ocampo are hard to beat. For illustrating my comedy novels Mar Santana comes closest to being my favorite.

MATIENZO: Are you now an employee of any of the houses that publish comics?

CAPARAS: I used to be an editor, until very recently, of *Affiliated Publications*. You see, I was being paid a flat rate. I found this abominable. Because it had the effect of constricting me. So I quit. When other publishing houses learned that I was freelancing, and therefore, available, these grabbed the opportunity.

Their editors asked to me to do novels for them. The offers are so numerous that I cannot find enough time to satisfy all of the demand. I knew I was popular, but I didn't know that I was that popular.

Only recently *G. Miranda & Sons* asked me to write a novel or two for their comics. But I haven't gotten around to doing these yet.

MATIENZO: How do you write your scripts?

CAPARAS: With a minimum of description. You see, I have this big respect for artists. I think all of them are intelligent enough to know how a panel should be drawn. I am not like other authors whose scripts are full of descriptions, minutely specifying how a particular panel should be drawn. Authors like that, consciously or not, do not respect the artists who draw their stories.

MATIENZO: Speaking of other authors at least one of these is critical of your work-style. He questions your ability to write stories with quality. He says it is impossible to write as much as you are doing, without loss of quality, that much of what you are writing cannot be very good. Your work load is just too much, he says. In short, some people aver that you are a hack, pure and simple. Do you agree?

CAPARAS: Of course, I don't. I know the person you are referring to. Maybe he is just in incapable of producing the kind of output I'm capable of. You see, that man got into the comics and became successful, in middle age. He finds writing 32 novels simultaneously impossible to accomplish, because he thinks that his particular case or experience is the 'standard' by which other authors should be measured. Well, I started at 23 and I'm only 33 now and I'm in excellent health. That's probably one reason why I can do the things I do.
Those people who call me a hack have only one excuse for calling me a hack, and that's because I work on so many novels at the same time. They have no idea at all about how I work.

MATIENZO: Please go on.

CAPARAS: All they see is the finished product. Do they know how I try, how I agonize, how I suffer? Do they know the *pain* both physical and mental, that go into the writing of my novels?

MATIENZO: Please continue.

CAPARAS: (hoarsely): I'm proud of what I've done and am doing. And do you know why? *Because I did it all myself.* All the novels I ever wrote, and all those I'm still writing, are my handiwork. Every single word of these, I wrote personally. I am not like some of those who criticize me! Some of them employ ghost writers, for your information.

MATIENZO: Ghost writers?

CAPARAS: You know, some authors would employ assistants to do their work for them. These assistants, mostly unknown writers just starting out in the field, actually do all the work. And all the credit goes to the authors, who does nothing.

People, like that person I am referring, to who, by the way, is still very active in comics, are in no position to criticize me. Because what they say will necessarily be biased, because I am competing against them. Their views will naturally be colored, either because of bias, or envy.

MATIENZO: Any last words?

CAPARAS: You're a pretty good artist yourself. Would you consider drawing one of my novels?

"I knew I was popular . . ."

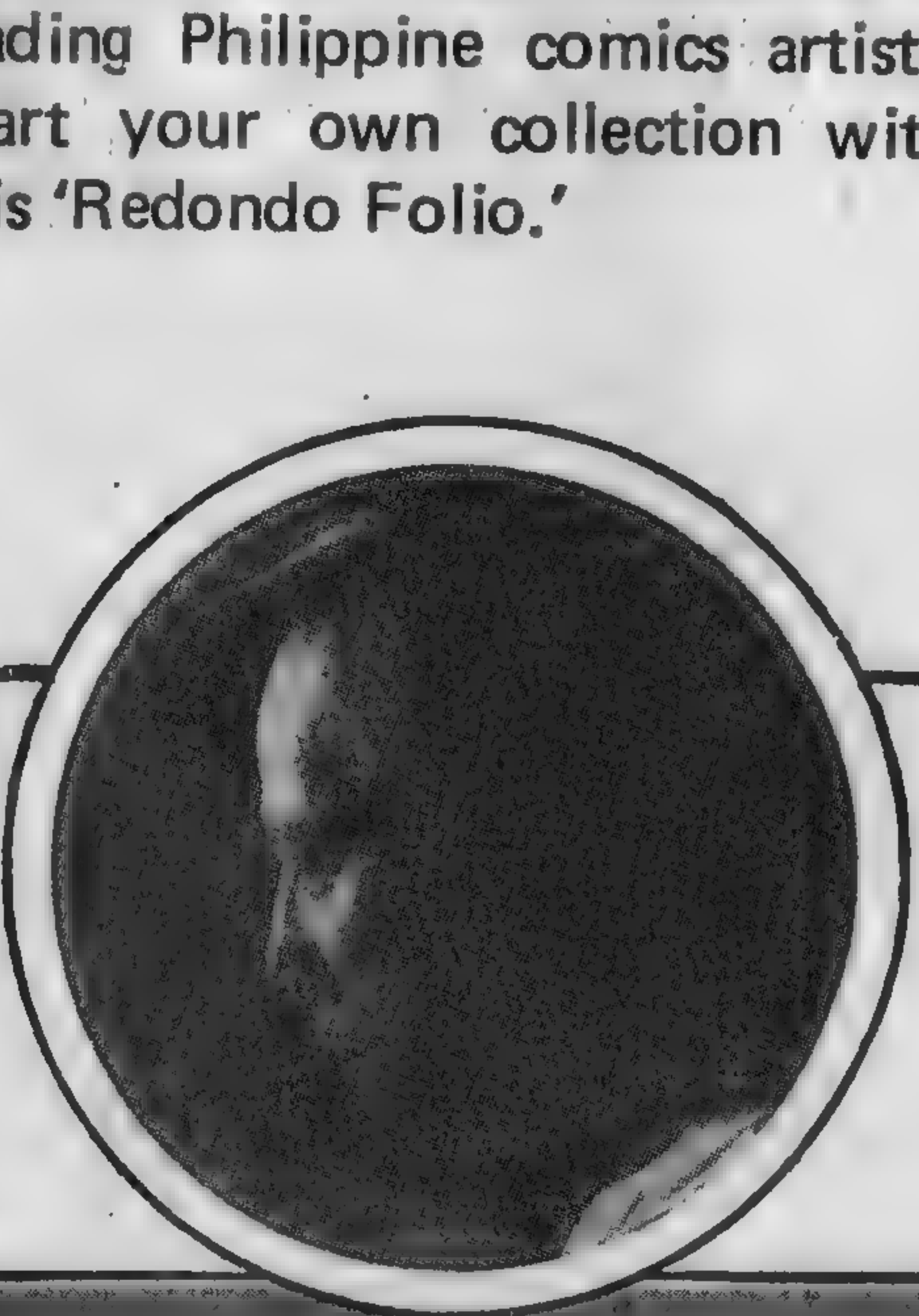
NESTOR REDONDO

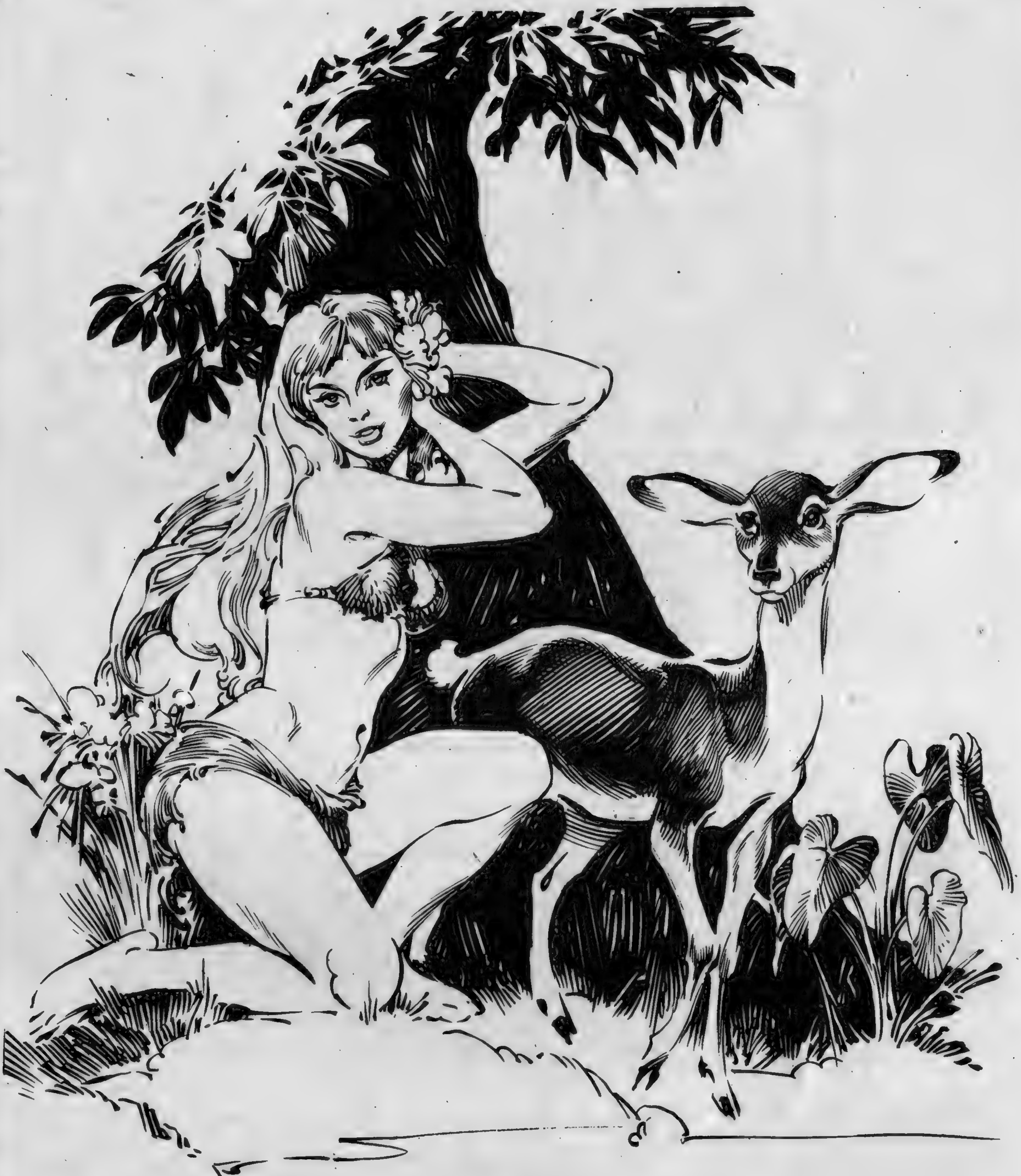
COLLECTOR'S ALBUM

The Philippine Comics Review proudly presents a folio of 5 illustrations created by the leading comics artist of the Philippines today — Nestor P. Redondo.

Redondo also did our covers. Done in oil on canvas, the front cover portrays *Drang a Prince of Lemuria* (and his woman), a fantasy / romance novel. The back cover, also in oil, was inspired by a short fantasy story, *Typ and the Moon Maid,* by Jim Vadeboncoeur, Jr.

The *'Collector's Album'* is envisioned to become a permanent feature of the PCR and will present the most recent creations of leading Philippine comics artists. Start your own collection with this 'Redondo Folio.'

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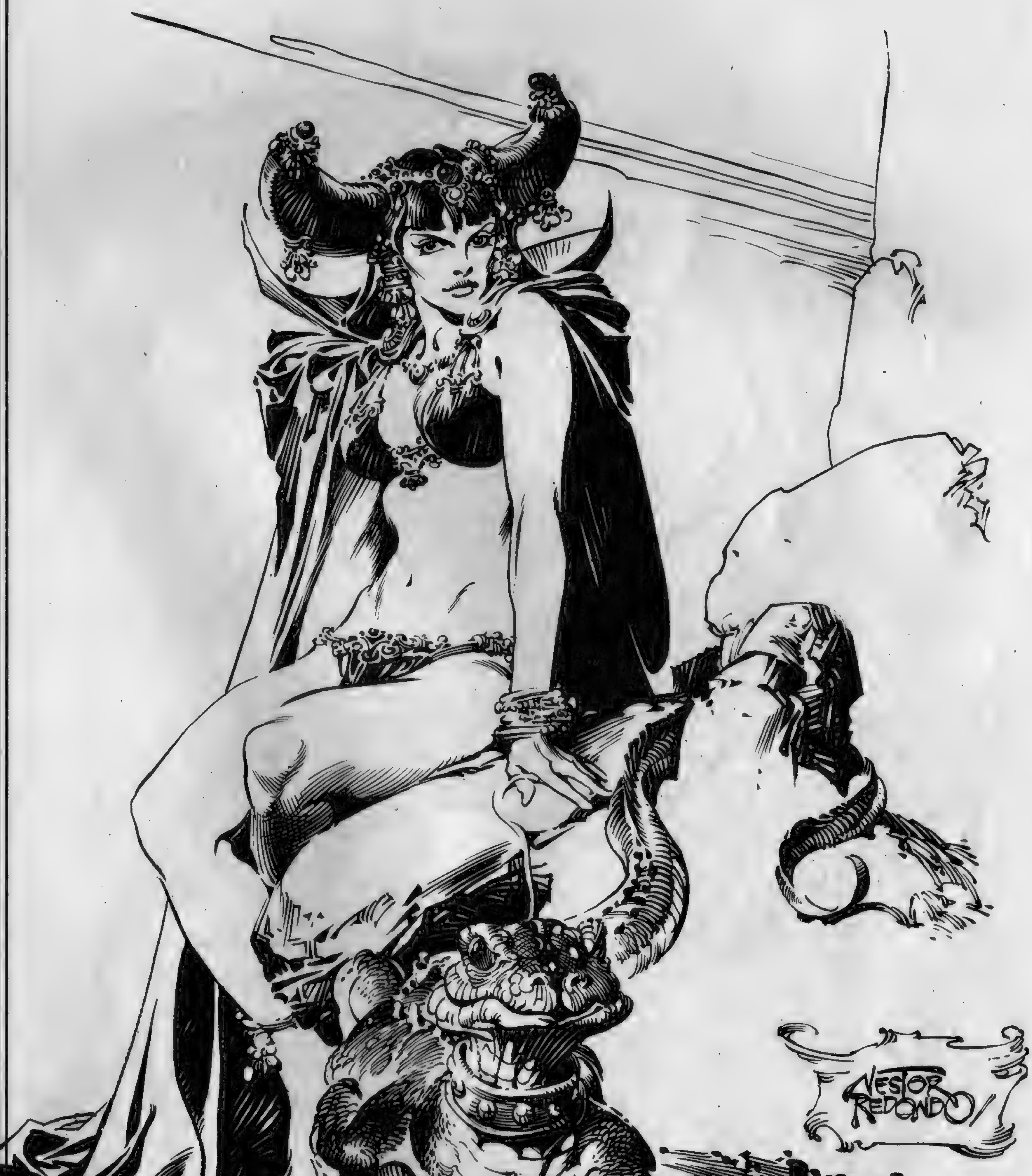
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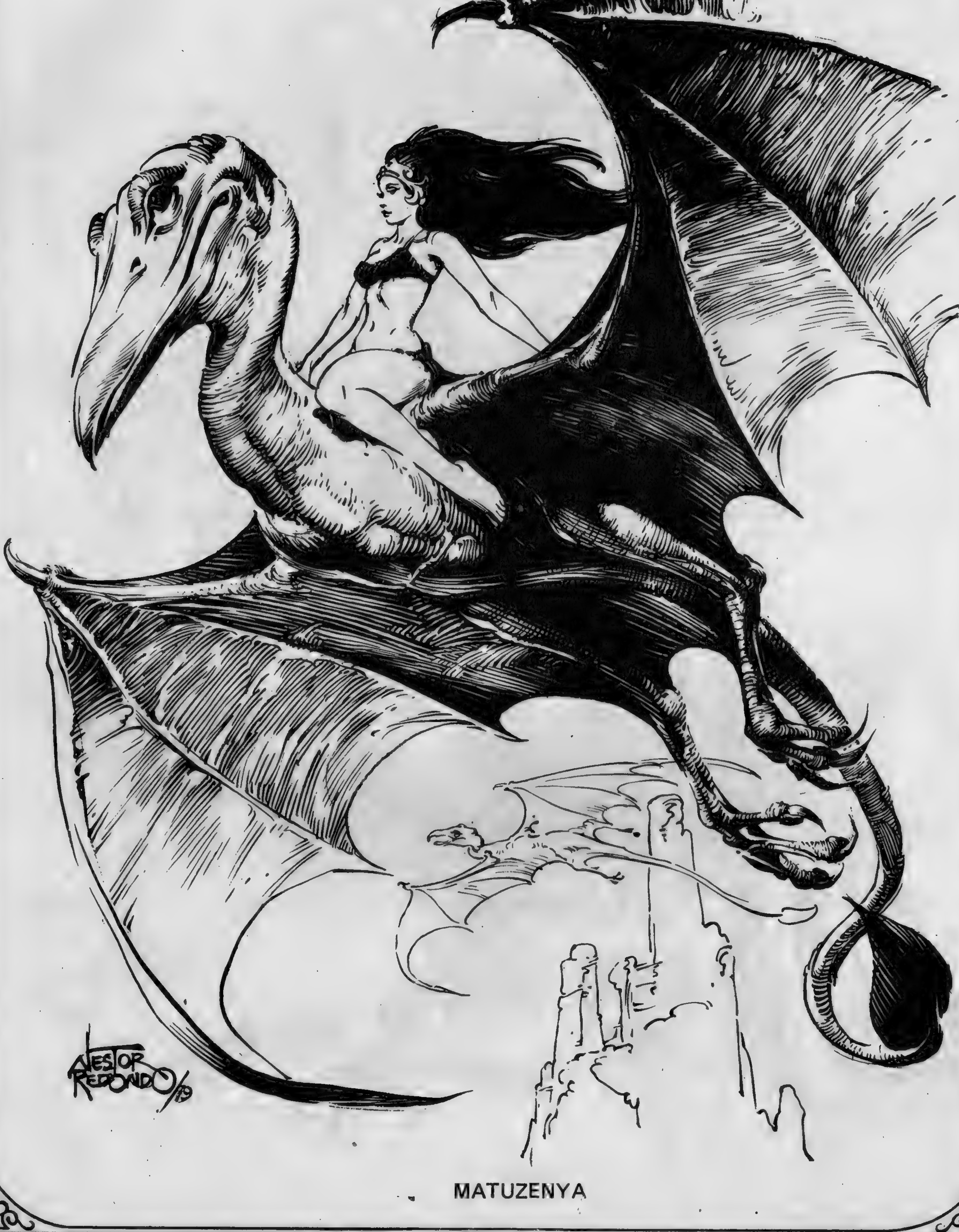
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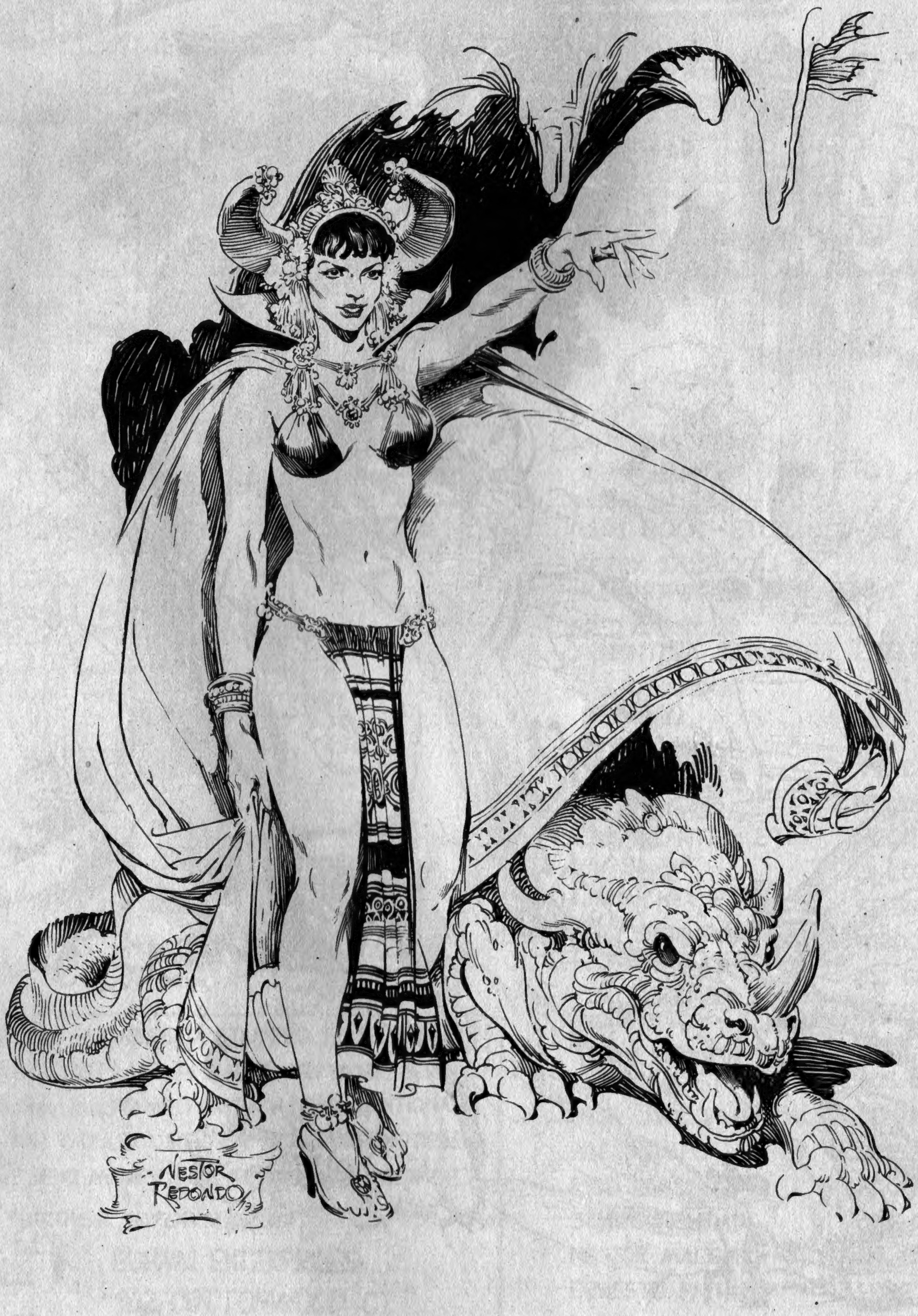
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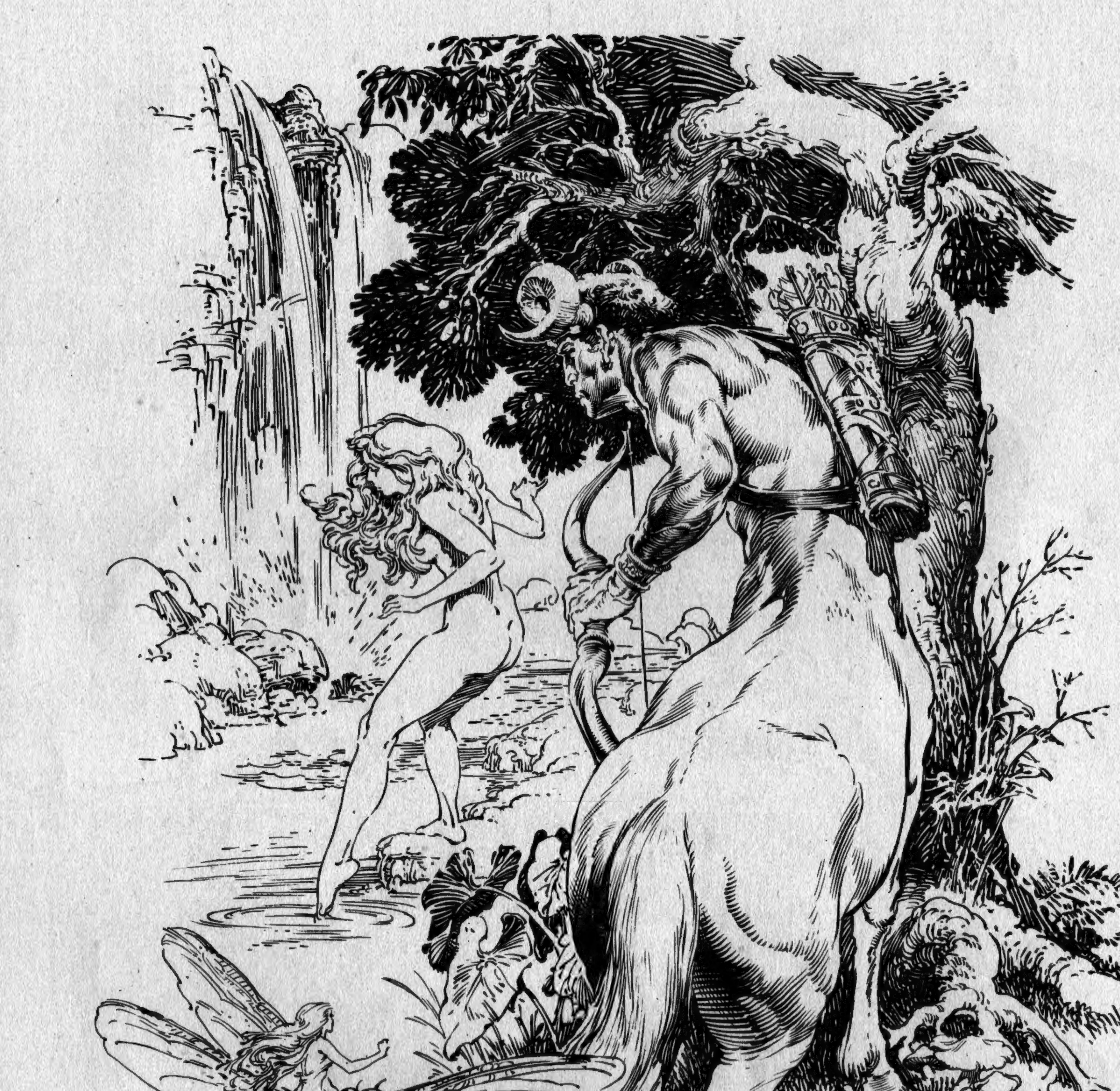
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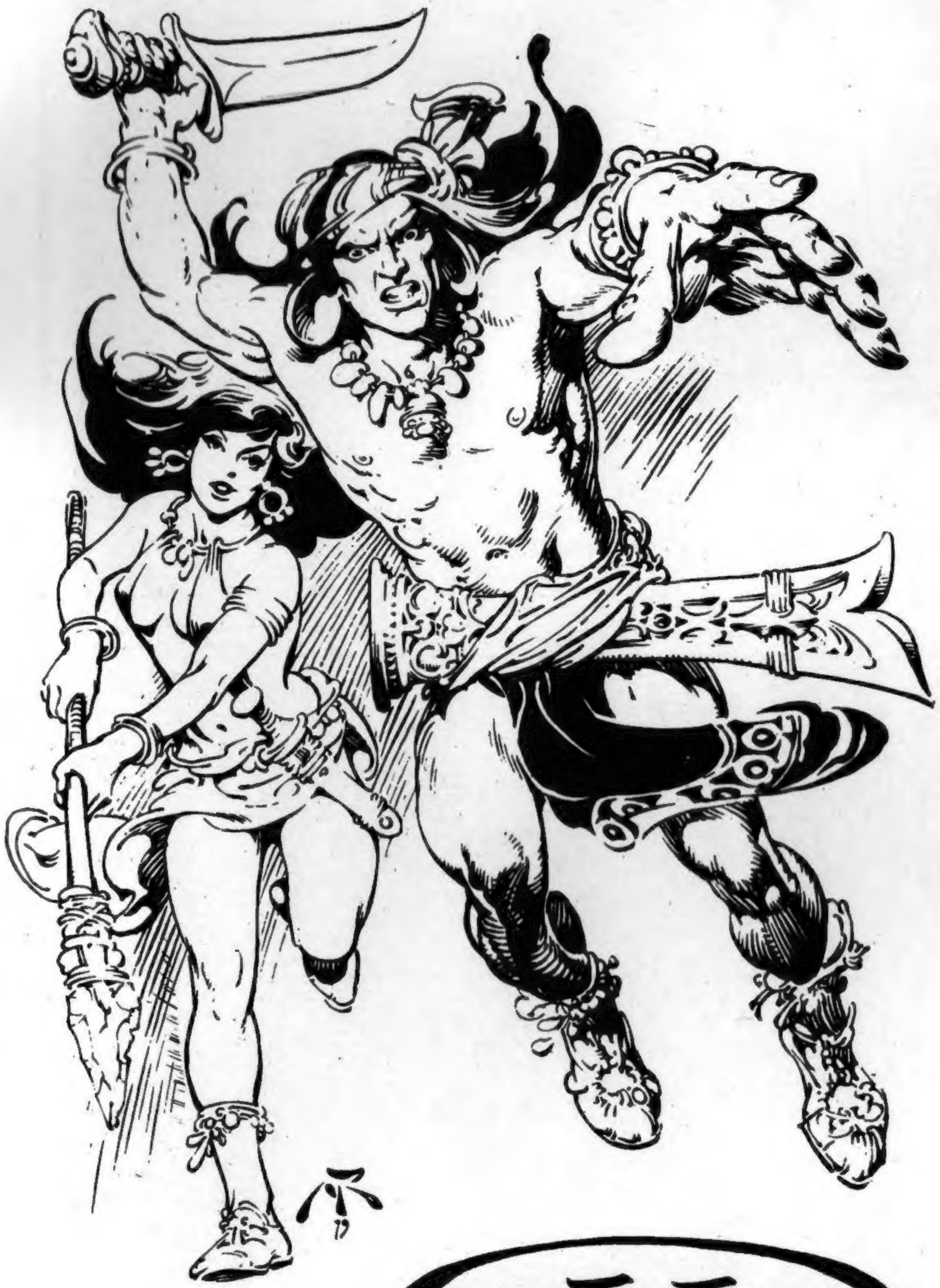

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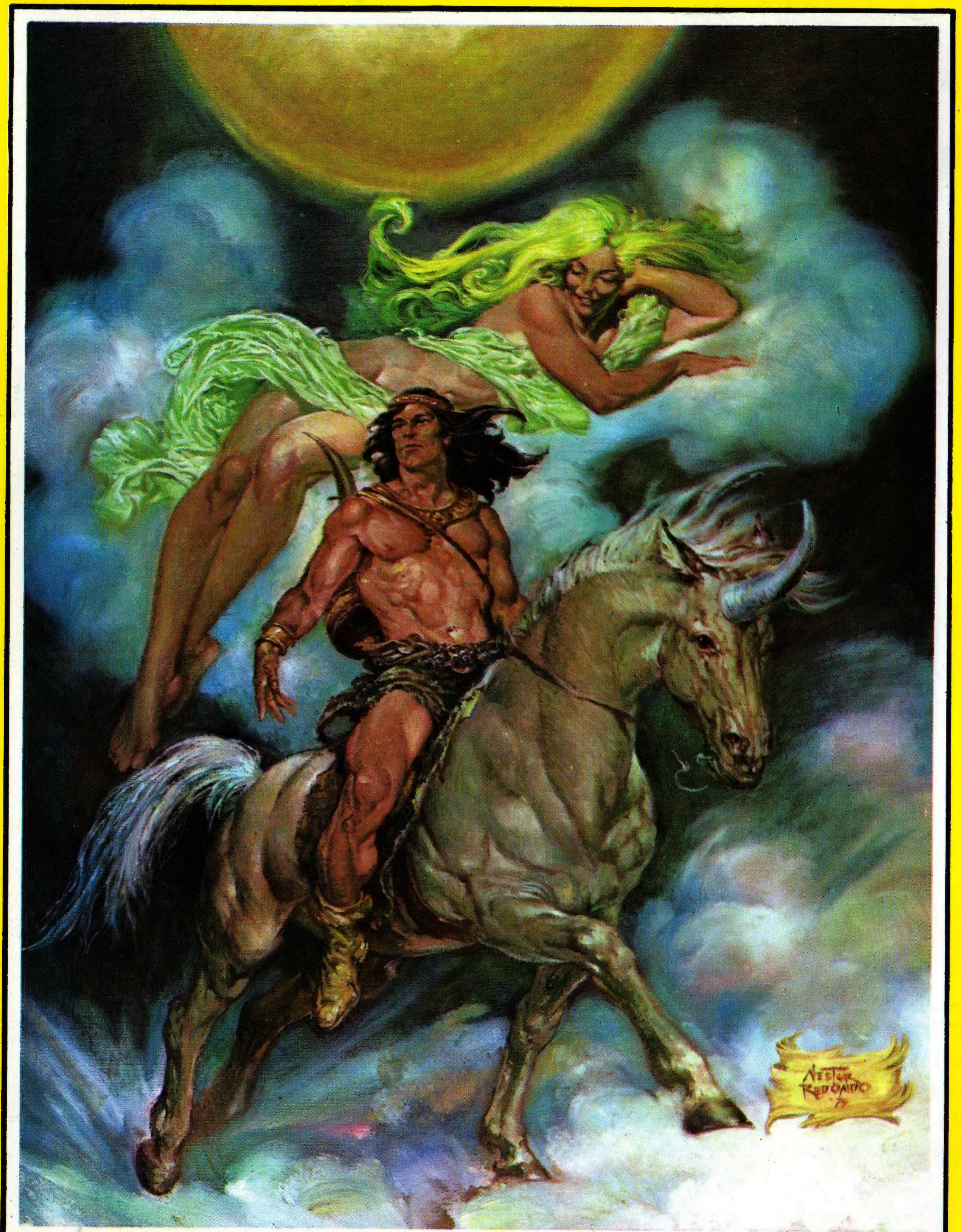
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